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THE MYSTERY OF MATTER

AND OTHER ESSAYS.

THE MYSTERY OF MATTER

AND OTHER ESSAYS.

BY

J. ALLANSON PICTON,

AUTHOR OF "NEW THEORIES AND THE OLD FAITH."

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PREFACE.

When a gradual landslip occurs on a great scale, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood are naturally anxious to know how far the movement may possibly extend, and what is likely to be the level of ultimate settlement. So, at the present day, when faith's centre of gravity is slowly but surely moving away from tradition and authority to some position of more stable equilibrium, all of us, when not rendered absolutely incoherent by alarm, have a reasonable wish to forecast the final result, or, at all events, to be assured of some limits beyond which the movement cannot extend. Of course, there can be no finality in opinion or knowledge. For even ascertained facts are always showing fresh aspects, or unfolding new meanings. But the question raised by the religious landslip of

our time is not—or ought not to be—at what sacred opinions will the movement stop? It rather asks,—are there any fundamentally constituent elements in human nature which must for ever necessitate religion? And farther,—is there, in the relation of our personal life to the world about us, anything which ensures to religion an adequate scope and a permanent place, under all fairly conceivable revolutions of thought? The former question was the main topic of a previous volume. The latter question, the larger and the more comprehensive, is dealt with in the following pages.

Such an enterprize, unless when undertaken by some recognized leader of thought, might seem self-condemned by its presumptuous ambition; were it not for two or three considerations, which may be urged in arrest of judgment. In the first place, no one expects at present either to receive or to give to such questions an answer which shall be final and exhaustive. And next, the matters at issue seem to be just at that point where the freest inter-communication of thought by the most ordinary men, if only they have a single eye to truth, appears pre-eminently desirable. After much agitation, some master mind may at length

arise, who, if he cannot control destiny, will, at all events, make peace between the past and the future. And again, if in our passage so far through the world, any one of us finds some conclusion burnt into him by a fire he has vainly sought to quench, he need not doubt that there will be others, even though they be but few, who will find the results of his mental conflict helpful to themselves. Besides, after all, the work must be judged on its own merits. If there is any good in it, that will, in Coleridge's sense of the word, "find" those to whom it can be of service. And if it finds none, no apology can avail it.

The essays constituting this volume are not entirely disconnected one from another; yet they are not so closely united as the chapters of a single treatise. They have risen one out of the other, in pursuit of the purpose indicated by the second question above raised. The first thought that occurs to any one now-a-days, in considering the relation of our personal life to the world around us, is the plausibility with which materialism offers to explain that relation and both its terms, in expressions of matter and motion. Or if materialism is not always so bold as to pretend now

to a final explanation, it at least insists that the explanation, if discoverable, would be simply the solution of a problem in molecular mechanics. It has long appeared to the present writer, that the spiritual philosophy opposed to materialism often loses much through a faithless hesitancy to admit, in all their fulness, the palpable facts which materialism has to offer in its own favour. The true policy would seem to consist in going the whole length with all the discoveries to which the materialistic method of enquiry can fairly lay claim. Our object should be to reduce to terms as precise as possible the uttermost phenomena, into which the microscope or chemical analysis converts the general appearances which affect the unaided senses. We should then find that all physical science, if only followed far enough, has metaphysical issues which are full of the profoundest suggestiveness. The first subject, therefore, in the following series, and that which gives, as it were, the key-note of the whole, is "The Mystery of Matter." The only answer that can be made to the suggestions thus obtained is the rejoinder: that what we call the metaphysical issues of physics are only the merging of all articulate know-

ledge in the noteless and boundless unknown. In the second essay, that on "The Philosophy of Ignorance," an attempt is made to allow full value to this objection, and also to show where and why it fails to arrest the spiritual aspirations of mankind. The faith, however, which prompts these aspirations, is often much misunderstood. It has been thought necessary, therefore, in another essay, the shortest of the series, to discuss the true meaning of "The Antithesis between Faith and Sight." The way is then open for an investigation of "The Essential Nature of Religion," in the course of which it is urged that, though the thing may be called by many names, its essence is recognizable in all the highest activities of human life, even where these have been condemned as irreligious and impious. The subject could not be left here. The signs of the times are too ominous to allow any one writing on such topics to shirk the prospects of the future. And the longest of all the essays is an attempt to show how the experience of past ages, and the knowledge of the present day, unite in pointing to some form of "Christian Pantheism" as the religion of the future.

I cannot send forth the book without further premising that its pre-eminent, almost its sole aim, is to maintain the reality, the power, and the necessity of spiritual religion. Associated from earliest days, and to the present time, with certain sections of the Church, which are generally credited with evangelical feeling, I must profess that, however they may dislike the opinions here set forth, it is a realization of the value belonging to the inmost essence of their faith which has prompted me to this work. I, for one, cannot remain silent while the inevitable task of reform is turned into a work of destruction. The spiritual descendants of the ancient saints for the most part fail to see how searching and far-reaching is the disintegrating influence of established scientific conclusions upon the whole framework of theological opinion. On the other hand, the prophets of science, dazzled by the wonders they unfold, have often but little susceptibility to those human feelings of the background of existence, which have formed the noblest inspirations of history. It is a case in which not so much intellectual gifts are needed, as a heart-felt appreciation of the power of religion, combined

with a simple acceptance of facts as proved by others.

Before writing these essays, I had read Mr. Matthew Arnold's papers on "Literature and Dogma" in the *Cornhill Magazine;* though I had not seen the complete work as it is published in a separate form. To the incidental acknowledgement made farther on, I wish here to add an expression of my general obligation to the papers which formed its germ. The extent of my disagreement on some points, both of opinion and feeling, in the expanded treatise will be sufficiently apparent in the sequel. Strauss' volume "Der Alte und Der Neue Glaube," I had not seen, until, as was the case with many others, my attention was called to it by Mr. Gladstone's Liverpool speech. Whatever may be the intellectual brilliancy of that book, there is much in the tone adopted, which would have operated rather as a warning than as an example. Since the whole of the essays were in the hands of the printer, it has been my good—or ill fortune to see one point or another which I fondly imagined might have some little novelty, most ably advanced by others. Indeed, one

or two coincidences in illustration are so remarkable, that I am only sorry I cannot honestly acknowledge indebtedness to Mr. Thornton, whose clock, in his essay on "Huxleyism," seems to keep the same time with my own in the "Mystery of Matter," or to Mr. Lawrenny, whose experience of wall patterns in a sick-chamber, as mentioned in his paper on "Cause and Design" in the *Fortnightly* for December, 1872, entirely accords with mine, as referred to in "Christian Pantheism."

STAMFORD HILL, *February, 1873.*

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ESSAYS.

I.

THE MYSTERY OF MATTER.

ERRATUM.

P. 222, line 1, for M. Arbrouseille *read* M. Arbrousset.

I.

THE MYSTERY OF MATTER.

IMAGINATIVE children, especially perhaps those whose spirits are quickened by the thronging impulses of town life, but whose finer feelings shrink from its sordid surroundings, are much given to fits of dreaming, such as "suit the shows of things to the desires of the mind." In sunny weather they will sit imprisoned by tall brick walls in a back-yard, where one or two tulips on a window-ledge stare up at the bit of sky, while sparrows wrangle on the eaves above; and in their day-dreams such young poets will build around them a world which answers to the longing of the heart. It is not pattern goodness, nor is it bold adventure, which forms the motive of the picture that their imagination draws; rather, it is a dim sense of incongruity between that tender winged, fluttering thing, which they are taught to call their soul, and the cruel grimy bars of circumstance which ring it round. It is beauty they want, and wonder, and romance; not so much the

romance of startling action, as the romance of mystery and delightful awe. And so the dull red walls are changed to rocks of porphyry and jasper: the stupid roar of the street outside becomes the music of the sea, which rises and falls through branching caves: the pavement is dissolved into green transparent water; in the clear depths fantastic coral grows, or splendid shells are strewn. This child that seems lying so still upon a truss of straw, with a broken wheelbarrow by his side, is in reality full of action and joy. He plunges into the beautiful water, and he hears the plash ringing through innumerable arches. The way is open through the depths. He glides hither and thither as he will, without labour or fear. He has made his own world and he is happy.

Years afterwards, the child, now grown a man, worn with labour and scarred with grief, may wander musingly through the dim streets where his life began; and, chancing upon the open door, he stands again in the brick-walled, flag-paved yard, where once he lay and dreamed. Still there are flowers upon the window-ledge; still sparrows wrangle on the eaves; and hardly a touch of change has passed upon the place. But with what a shock of incongruity at first, melting into longing, tearful emotions, does the matured man try to throw himself back into the circumstances of the child! For a moment he is startled at the narrowness and sordidness of the limits within which his young imagination played. But under the

magic spell of association, length after length of years is measured back, and clouds of forgetfulness are rolled away, until he feels again the glow of those early summer days, when the dull courtyard was transformed into an enchanter's cave. Yet he does not care now to renew those boyish dreams. Nay, he could not if he tried. It is only in the most vivid realization of the material surroundings that he can revive his departed life, and feel the identity of the vanished boy with the present man. Peering about he sees still in its place the broad smooth stone, which was to him in his building enterprises as the threshing-floor of Araunah to Solomon. There are the descending steps, which, when covered by a board, served as a dungeon for his conquered enemies. Up above is the wall coping, to which he daringly climbed, with no less triumph than is felt by a member of the Alpine Club in surmounting the Matterhorn. There are the window-panes through which he caught his mother's face, with now a smile and now a warning glance. And from that door sounded his father's cheery voice, with a summons to a walk, or to the inspection of some new surprising toy. Here again is the wicket through which the laughing eyes of some girl play-fellow peeped on sunny holidays, that she might catch him dreaming, and with a bound startle him from his reverie. How deep is the silence which the memory of those voices makes! For the place that knew them can know

them no more for ever; and it is always "the touch of a vanished hand"—always "the sound of a voice that is still," which is above all omnipotent to invest material circumstance with a mysterious spell that holds the heart enthralled. It is no longer fancy, it is the doting love for every link of union with the past, which gives to the most forbidding spot a tenderness and beauty of its own.

But farther, this change in the significance of material surroundings is accompanied by another equally characteristic and more suggestive. For, go where he will, he does not need now to shut his eyes to outward things, or transform them by imagination, in order to breathe that air of mystery which so strangely fascinates the soul. Whereas at one time brick walls and gloomy courts must be masked by a drapery of fancy, before the desires of the mind could have free play; now the same mind feeds hungrily on commonest things, and dotes upon a worn flight of steps or a dingy door, as though they were luminous with some hallowed light. Things that he had long forgotten they now bring to mind. Feelings bright and evanescent as cloudland seem to dawn again out of a murky window-pane. And what, he asks, is the magic charm which this dull matter about me wields? Here have these walls stood motionless, inert, while I was far away. The dust and ruin of life's conflicts fell upon childhood's memories, and buried them out of sight. Yet after the lapse of twenty years familiar form

and colour stir forgotten places in the heart; vanished forms look from the window; voices long silent speak again from the dumb stone. What is the power which these material substances have, to touch in so inspiring a fashion the immaterial soul? Association? Yes, but that is only a name for the fact, another way of saying that the sights and the memories and emotions come back together. To give a name is one thing; to give an explanation is another. What has happened? Certain dirty red rays of reflected light, intermingled with some sparkles of undivided beams, have impinged upon my retina, and have caused, I suppose, vibrations, though I should never have known it without being told, in the nerves that run from the back of the eyes to the optic lobes of the brain. These vibrations coursed along through various complexities, until they reached some ultimate nerve cells and could get no further. So far there is nothing more than vibrations; but somewhere,—shall we say at the other side of these nerve cells?—there comes out something that I cannot in any way identify or connect with vibrations—a sudden memory, a distinct vision, a revived emotion, in which those dirty red rays are altogether forgotten and extinguished. I may be told that the two sets of affections, physical and mental, are associated together in the memory, so that the one recalls the other. I know it is so as a matter of fact; but there is beneath the fact something that I cannot understand.

Let me keep distinctly in view the two factors in the phenomenon. There are on the one hand certain reflected rays of light impinging upon the retina in a particular pattern; and there are on the other hand certain memories and feelings, of which an hour ago I was completely unconscious,—that is, they were positively non-existent. For the essential characteristic of an emotion is that it is felt, and an emotion that is not felt is nothing in the world. Now I can account for the vibration in my optic nerves, and even for my recognition of it as a familiar feeling. The possibility of it existed all along in these brick walls. I came here, and the possibility was realized. But where was the memory of the old days? Where the forgotten emotion? It could not be in the rays of light, because they would not convey the same impression to any one else. They could not be found therefore in the retina or the optic nerve, which answered solely to the vibrations of light. They could not be in the conscious mental side of the ultimate nerve cells, simply because I was not conscious of them. A man may indeed tell me that there is some infinitesimal speck in a deeply-seated nerve cell, which cherished unknown to me the impressions made so long ago; and that when it was stirred up by the old familiar combination of dirty red beams, its vibrations necessarily shook out again, as it were, the old impressions. But I don't think I should learn much from the explanation; indeed it would

appear to me, the word association "writ large,"—another mode of stating the inexplicable fact.

Thus it comes to pass that while the child's imagination delights in clouds of fancy that veil the stern features of external life, the matured and thoughtful man delights in dissolving them into mystery, and opening through every stone an endless vista. For it is not only in places pregnant with associations that he feels the subtlety of matter. But everything on which he gazes in the vision of the world hints at an essence which he longs in vain to grasp. The bit of chalk which he crushes beneath his feet, expands under the microscope into a world of minute organic beauty, whose exquisite perfection delights, while its unutterable profusion staggers the mind. The honest daylight loses its simplicity for him, and becomes an incomprehensible ocean trembling with infinitesimal waves which shake the whole universe with their ethereal tremors. The hair of a nettle assaults him no longer with a merely physical sting, but pierces his very soul with the materialistic suggestions which its protoplasm inspires.

For, not through any hostility to science, but just because of his susceptibility to the fascination of its discoveries, such a man will in all probability find the atomic theory of matter a burden and a terror. He has travelled; he has watched the sunset on the sea; he has worshipped, like Coleridge, in the valley of Chamounix; he has found that piles of earth and tons

of water can be so arranged as to draw from him tears of longing and rapture; he has begun to regard material forms no longer as prison-bars shutting in his soul, but rather as organ keys, by means of which some mysterious power calls forth a flood of music to which they have no resemblance. Let any philosopher then prove to him, as indeed it is easy to do apparently and plausibly, that this gloriously-real world, so far surpassing his childish dreams, is ultimately reducible to little kernels of an insensate substance, which has no attributes whatever except dead impenetrability, unloving attraction, stolid repulsion; and the philosopher will appear to be offering simply the strongest reasons for suicide and a speedy return to the atomic, or at least molecular condition. And if he is strong enough to face steadily the questions which are now raised, such a doubting soul will feel that there is no return for him to the high *a priori* road of predisposition* and assumption; there is no retreat for him to his old dual conception of mind and matter, master and slave. There is only one escape possible from the horrible oppression of a universal death. He must go right through materialism and come out at the other side, where it merges into pure spiritualism. And happy will he be, as well as wise and valiant, if after a dark hour,—the "darkness that may be felt," the darkness of a man who wakes to find himself buried alive,—he sees

* Predisposition, however, has its value; see "Antithesis of Faith and Sight."

at last the whole phantasmagoria of palpable things cleared away, like clouds drunk up by the sun, into the grand and blessed unity of substance, light, and life.

This is not the experience of an individual merely: it is the story of the race. For early generations, like imaginative children, veiled the external world in a mist of fancy. Not knowing the true inherent wonder of the world, they adorned it with dreams of gods, fairies, or genii. They crowned the rocks of Olympus with airy palaces. They imputed a personal life and will to every stream and every wind. The mind, as it worked, wrought only one result: all its "makings" were poetry. There was no perplexity then involved in the apparent contrast between mind and matter. For imagination mastered matter, and adapted it to the desires of the mind. And one may well understand how, when philosophy had developed the notion of a matter,—*materia*—*hylè*—distinct from and logically opposite to mind, the living spirit of man felt a revulsion from the thing so presented, and often identified it with the very essence of evil.

But with the progress of civilization history, the generic memory, arose; and then, sanctified as the birthplace of wisdom or heroism, many a classic ground was exalted beyond any claims that nature had bestowed; because it was transformed by the touch of association. To the early settlers I suppose the land of Egypt was attractive mainly because of the facilities

which it offered for the supply of their bodily needs. It was the scene of hard labour, too, where each man "cast his bread upon the waters that he might find it after many days," or "sowed his seed and watered it with his foot as a garden of herbs." And they soothed the hardness of their lot with pictured imaginations of the spirit-land, where kings lie in their glory and the slave is free from his toil. But to later generations, notably to the Greeks, Egypt became the land of sacred wonder. Its river was a mystery. Its tombs were as the threshold of eternity. Its temples were homes of divine wisdom. And all its attractions sprang from this, that it was a land rich in human experiences and sanctified by a thousand memories, which made the silence of its monuments more eloquent than speech. Homer must needs crowd the plain of Troy with supernatural beings to make it a fit arena for his imagination. But now its very desolation inspires; and plain and mountain, stream and sea are irradiated by the enthusiastic memories of the beholder. To Homer Scamander was a living power; and its floods were actuated by angry passion to compass Achilles' death. To the modern traveller it is a puny stream; yet somehow spiritualized into grandeur by its suggestions of a departed world.

But this modern traveller, if he sympathizes with the new life as well as the old, has no need of the spell of association to invest matter with fascination. The microscope and the telescope, spectrum analysis and

biological research have made it impossible to watch the motes in a sunbeam or the faintest twinkle of a star without a sense of exhaustless mystery. When the Israelites, rising early in the morning, saw the earth covered with strange food from heaven,—"white like coriander seed," we are told—they were startled like children who look out of their windows and for the first time in their lives see the ground covered with snow. "Man—hu?" What is this? they cried; and not being able to give any answer, they kept the wondering question for a name. It is not the only case in which a name has been expressive of ignorance rather than of knowledge. At least this is, it seems to me, by far the most significant result of all the splendid boasts of modern science. No doubt, after some achievements of knowledge, especially as applied to useful invention, the first feeling was one of almost contemptuous triumph. Men talked with pride of the mastery wielded by mind over "brute matter," which they blasted with gunpowder, and squeezed in hydraulic presses, and welded by steam hammers, and compelled by torture of fire to submit its gigantic forces to their will. And the soul was undisturbed in its complacency, because every result achieved seemed only to concentrate attention the more on mind and will as the supreme wonder of the world. But of late years a change of tone has been manifest; and matter itself in its ultimate constitution has become the object not of philosophic inquiry only, but of an

enthralling interest, in which vague feelings of alarm and jealousy add to the keenness of curiosity. For the once despicable element, armed by physical science with weapons of deadly precision, threatens to turn the tables on mind, and to reward hasty contempt with the doom of annihilation.

The truth is, that in modern times science and philosophy combine to make impossible that old sword-and-sheath, or shell-and-kernel theory of the world, by which men once expressed the unfathomable contrast of "within and without." The intimacy of relationship which scientific research establishes between soul and body is such, that one feels relationship to be hardly the word to express what looks much more like identity. And when once this is realised, it becomes impossible henceforward to find satisfaction in the ordinary dualistic notion of two ultimate substances fundamentally and essentially distinct. The issue then *seems* to be blank materialism. But when a steady effort is made to follow up materialism to its innermost significance, it is found to be as penetrable as one of Pepper's ghosts: we pass right through it, and come out at the other side,—some say, into the formless void of infinite ignorance, but as others think, into the assured consciousness of eternal, all-comprehensive, all-pervasive Life, as the only substance. Thus Berkeley's idealism with a difference, and Spinoza's pantheism with a difference, are pressed on the consideration of ordinary readers and thinkers now by

methods which these prophetic minds, far-seeing as they were, could hardly anticipate.

It will be a sufficient illustration of these remarks if I refer to the effect produced on the public mind by two celebrated discourses of Professor Huxley—a man who, I venture to think, has rendered services to the Church, if less signal, yet not less valuable than those which he has rendered to science; for he has not only brought religionists face to face with facts, with a vigour and a clearness almost peculiar to himself, but he has made concerning those facts suggestions of more importance to the future of religion than he himself perhaps would dare to promise. The two above-mentioned Lay Sermons, on "the Physical Basis of Life," and on Descartes' "Discourse, &c.," have undoubtedly defined the only terms on which an ultimate and thorough reconciliation is possible between physical science and spiritual religion.* Rivalling Berkeley in sparkling distinctness of statement, while of course far surpassing him in knowledge of physical phenomena, Mr. Huxley has shown, with a force amounting to demonstration, that by whichever path we set out, whether that of Materialism or that of Idealism, if we only go far enough we are brought to the same point. Whether this great master of fact and language was equally happy in his discussion of Bishop

* Mr. Herbert Spencer had done the same thing before, in a different way; but of course the biological questions treated by Mr. Huxley awakened popular attention, as a work on philosophy could hardly be expected to do.

Berkeley, it would be presumptuous in an obscure critic to offer an opinion. But one cannot help feeling that if the multitudes who read with the eagerness of fearful curiosity the "Physical Basis of Life," could have been disabused of their supposed knowledge about certain ultimate properties of matter, they would have ceased to anathematize as a materialist one of the most powerful opponents, and perhaps the most completely armed, that Materialism has ever had.

For all that the distinguished speaker did in this discourse, was to call attention to certain indisputable facts. And perhaps it was the impossibility of denying these facts, which was a main cause of the uneasiness that most of us felt. Thus he told us that all organisations, from the lichen up to the man, are all composed mainly of one sort of matter which in all cases, even those at the extremity of the scale, is almost identical in composition. And the one other fact on which he insisted was, that every living action, from the vibrations of cilia by the foraminifer to the imagination of Hamlet or the composition of the Messiah, is accompanied by, and in a sense finds an equivalent expression in, a definite waste or disintegration of material tissue. Thus it is no less certain that the muscles of a horse are strained by a heavy load, than it is that the brain of a Shakespeare undergoes molecular agitation, producing definite chemical results, in the sublime effort of imagination.

Besides these facts there were some few assertions,

denials, and inferences, which suggested fair matter for argument, and were accordingly fiercely debated. But I do not at all believe that these more original elements had very much influence in producing the excitement which followed. The surprise, the shock, and the prolonged uneasiness realized by so many minds were, I think, really caused by the lucid and telling statement of facts already known and indisputable. Many of us perhaps learned a little animal physiology at school. But I venture to think that not one in fifty of the readers of that discourse had ever tried to realize what they meant by the union of soul and body. And if they ever did try to think about it, the distinctness of the two was nearer and clearer to consciousness than their alliance. Hence when such readers were told that the soul never does one single thing by itself apart from some excitement of bodily tissue, they experienced a shock, which was all the more unpleasant because it was impossible to deny the fact. That thought and love and indignation and fear, which in one direction find their expression in majestic eloquence, should in another direction find their expression in the production of carbonic acid urea and water, seemed altogether monstrous and terrible. Such a union as this between soul and body seemed logically to amount to identity. And yet the poor soul felt that, whatever might be said, still it knew that it was not carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, or nitrogen, nor yet all of them put together. Hence

arose an apparent schism between logic and consciousness; which was very distressing to many minds. The distracted reader scarcely thought of asking himself how much he knew about carbon or oxygen or the rest of them. The fact that he could not think about them without producing them was something frightful; and therefore in all probability he betook himself to the usual resource of mental helplessness, whether in ecclesiastical conclaves or pot-house debates—he took to cursing.

When, for instance, ordinary men are told that "sooner or later we shall arrive at a mechanical expression of consciousness, just as we have arrived at a mechanical equivalent of heat;"* and when they hear this assertion illustrated by reference to a pound-weight falling through the distance of a foot, and giving rise to a definite amount of heat as its equivalent; such hearers instantly picture to themselves a pair of scales with a man's soul placed on the one side and a pound or a ton weight, as the case may be, on the other. And they persist in supposing the speaker to mean that the conscious life of the one is equivalent to, in the sense of being worth no more than, the (supposed) unconscious mechanical force of the other. They conceive the soul transmuted into a potato-dealer's iron weight, and they shudder with a righteous horror of such a materialistic doctrine. Yet, if they could but realize that all their knowledge of weight is the conscious

* Lay Sermons, &c., 1870, p. 372.

apprehension of force in one form, and that all they know of the desire to lift it is the conscious apprehension of force in another form, they would themselves feel how possible it is that the one form of force might be expressed in terms of the other. They might or might not agree in the possibility of applying this mode of interpretation to all the subtle variations of conscious energy, but they would at least acquit the proposal of "gross and brutal materialism."

The truth is, that in these days of Mudie, and Library Companies (Limited), thousands, if not the million, read much which they have just education enough to misunderstand; and no lucidity of exposition can save us from errors occasioned by inveterate inaccuracy on our own part in regard to the most elementary terms. The rough philosophy of ordinary intelligence recognizes, or fancies that it recognizes, two utterly distinct kinds of existence—one called matter or body, and the other spirit or soul. Such rough philosophy may be sufficient for most practical purposes; but it is liable to be sorely perplexed by lectures on "Protoplasm." For in the common view these two kinds of existence are so essentially different, that no transition is conceivable from the one to the other, and, indeed, no higher generalization can possibly combine them in real unity. To such a view the word *universe* must be a misnomer. There is no ultimate oneness of things. And therefore every approximation to a final general-

ization, whether from the side of science or of religion, excites suspicion and fear just in proportion as its drift is perceived. For the false assumption, like a trivial error in the terms of a calculation, though of no practical import within a narrow range, becomes more and more perplexing and possibly disastrous, as the magnitude of the problem grows. Tell the believer in two substances that all living organisms, from the lichen up to man, are composed mainly of one sort of matter, which in all cases, even in those at the extremity of scale, is identical in chemical composition, and your hearer may only be interested and surprised. Tell him that every vital action, from the vibration of cilia up to the contemplations of a saint, is accompanied by, and finds an equivalent expression in, a definite waste of material tissue: discomfort and suspicion will be the result. Tell him that all species and all generations of the animal and vegetable world have been produced, under discoverable laws, by gradual modifications of one original and everywhere identical protoplasm: his face will flush with indignation, and anathemas will rise to his lips.

Certainly the sort of mental anxiety to which I allude has been a good deal aggravated by the increased and increasing hold which the doctrine of development, in one form or another, has indisputably taken on most inquiring minds. Natural selection may or may not be regarded as sufficient to account for the origin of species. But I am stating a

mere fact, and not upholding any theory, when I say that the notion of successive acts of special creation out of nothing, or out of inorganic dust, has been virtually abandoned by all whose observations of nature have been made on such a scale as to entitle their opinions to any weight. And those ordinary readers who have intelligence enough to note this fact are usually possessed by the feeling, right or wrong, that if once the doctrine of development be fairly established in regard to the brute creation, the arguments for extending it to man will be irresistible. Whether that be the case or not, it is certainly true that our interest in the ultimate constitution of matter derives a terrible eagerness from the rapid growth and prevalence of theories founded on the doctrines of continuity, development and the correlation of forces. Now, it is not my business here, nor does it lie within my capacity to uphold such theories on scientific grounds. But, at any rate, they exist. They rest on large inductions. They are receiving fresh accessions of evidence every day; and surely, unless truth absolutely requires us to do so, it is not wise to risk popular confidence in the supremacy of spirit and life in the order of the world on the chance that those theories may ultimately prove to be false.

For the purpose of the present argument, however, it matters not whether the theories referred to are true or not. They assert, at any rate, that unity of the world, which in some form or other must ultimately

be accepted; and at which, in any form, believers in two substances must stumble. It is the slow, but most perceptible current of popular thought towards the last generalization, the idea of a *universe,* which is the real cause of all the perplexing eddies in side channels and private mill-dams of theological vested interests. Suspicion of miracle, impatience of the Athanasian creed, discomfort at the notion of creation out of nothing, all of which are signs of these times,—in a sense in which they never were of any other age,—derive their whole force from that sense of a comprehensive unity to which the discoveries of modern science have given so grand an awakening. Whoever then contributes a side light, a shade of thought, a suggestive word on the mystery of matter, is doing what he can to hasten that day when "God shall be all in all."

Let us try if we cannot conceive clearly the mental condition of a man who feels most acutely the apparent encroachments of materialism. Such a man uses familiarly the word "substance," in what he thinks to be a clear and definite sense; although, ten to one, he has never put his definition into words. Roughly, I think, we may say that anything he can thump or squeeze or crush, anything that resists him, however delicately, like a waft of air, is a substance. Good Dr. Johnson, when bewildered by Berkeleyite subtleties about the non-existence of matter, indignantly thumped his fist on the table and exclaimed, "Here it is, sir! here it is!"

He, evidently, philosopher though he was in Boswell's eyes, shared that position of the common mind which I am now endeavouring to describe, and regarded as substance anything which in any degree withstands the fist. Hence bricks, iron, wood, feather-beds, water and gas are all substances. Fire is doubtful; still, as it swallows up other substances, newspaper reporters may be right in calling it "the devouring element." Electricity is more doubtful still. It may be called "the electric fluid." But there is a mystery about it, which to the common mind is inconsistent with honest substance. *Light* is a puzzle. The ordinary mind does not regard it as a substance, and yet it always streams from a substance; but until attention and reflection are thoroughly excited no inconsistency is felt here. So far, then, all is plain. The common observer knows himself to be surrounded by many substances, which he is sure are no part of himself, and which seem, for the most part, in themselves heavy, stupid, inert. There is no mystery at all in this, he thinks. Here is the realm of common sense and tangible evidence. But now, when he comes to think of himself, here he apprehends a mystery. He does not realize his own existence as he does that of material substances around him. Certainly we have heard of people pinching themselves when confounded by surprise, to convince themselves that they were really present in the flesh. But as a general rule a man does not come to self-consciousness by feeling his ribs, or by biting his

lips, but by a direct perception, which is like nothing but itself. Accordingly the common mind draws a great distinction between its perception of itself, and its perception of substances around. And to that subtle essence, which it feels itself to be, it gives the name of spirit. It would not, I suppose, always call spirit a substance. But whatever names be used, in effect it comes to this, that the rough philosophy of common sense recognizes, or fancies that it recognizes, the existence of two utterly distinct kinds of substance, one which it calls matter or body, and the other spirit or soul. According to this view matter, however ancient, is a new thing in the universe. Spirit alone is eternal. And as matter is utterly and fundamentally different from spirit, with no possibility of a transition from one to the other, it follows that matter must have been at one time called out of pure nothing into sudden being. This, of course, has not been always held. For many of the ancients regarded matter as eternal. Partly, however, from a natural and proper intolerance of two diverse substances equally eternal, and partly from a forced interpretation of certain passages of scripture, which will fairly bear a very different construction, the ordinary common sense theory of the world now insists on the creation of matter as well as individual souls out of nothing at all. Then, of course, matter being solid, inert, incapable of feeling or consciousness, is associated with clearness, tangibility, mortality, and evil; while spirit is

mysterious, etherial, the true vehicle of life, the proper and only subject of religion and immortality.

Such being the theory of the world as embraced by the common mind, there is little wonder that lectures on protoplasm, especially when combined with theories of development, should cause many a flutter of heart; which, by the way, is all the more painful because it seems to confirm materialism; and many a snarl, which according to Dr. Darwin goes far to prove the theory which excited it. For if every possible mental energy finds its equivalent expression in mechanical or chemical terms, it is impossible to avoid an uncomfortable suspicion that the distinction between soul and body is not quite so clear and utter as we had thought. And if in the course of the next generation it should really come to be believed that the whole power and glory of the living forms which throng and adorn, and even subdue the world, have been gradually evolved out of a speck of irritable jelly; alas, alas, for the noble dream of a God-breathed inspiration and a divine image in man! Alas for the sacred roll of promises that gleam, and rebukes that burn, and living words that empower the faint! All, all will be gone, but only one doleful utterance—"I said in mine heart concerning the sons of men that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts."

It is evident, then, that the terrible conclusions, too hastily formed by hearers of lectures on Protoplasm,

proceed entirely on the common assumption that what we call matter is something fundamentally and essentially different from spirit; something heavy, lifeless, inert; something that lies hid beneath, and is the foundation of the etherial vision of the world. But if that assumption be wholly gratuitous, the mere creation of false analogy; if, when closely examined, it resolves itself into a tissue of incongruities, mutually destructive, unthinkable, impossible; we cannot say that such a conclusion solves for us the riddle of the earth; we cannot say that materialism, in a fair sense of the word, becomes impossible; but we can say that materialism and spiritualism would then be felt to exhibit different aspects of the same everlasting fact; and physical research might henceforth unfold to us only the energies of Infinite Life, self-governed by eternal law.*

* The general line of argument which follows is of course suggested by Professor Huxley in the two Lectures on Protoplasm and on Descartes, to which allusion has already been made more than once. Readers must judge whether the aim and application are so far identical as to make a re-statement in my own way needless. But the argument has been involved in all spiritualistic as distinguished from materialistic philosophy, almost since human thought first began to wrestle with the enigma of the world. And if in the present age, anything of the kind should be thought new, it is for the same reason that has made assertions about protoplasm or bioplasm seem bold and startling. What was once the property of a few isolated thinkers, has in our time been popularized and made accessible to minds of ordinary intelligence.

Which amongst the innumerable facts that store the memory even of the most ignorant, is that of which we are most confidently certain? There can be little doubt about the answer. Children, fond of emphatic utterance, but innocent of all expletives, will often strengthen their assertions with the addition "as sure as ever I'm alive." And in such words, without knowing it, simple souls of maturer growth often illustrate and endorse the principle of Descartes, who reared his system of the universe from the apparently syllogistic, but really identical proposition, "I think, therefore I am;" *i.e.*, "I am thinking, therefore I am a thinker;" or "I am, therefore I am." But the fuller form of the proposition is not wholly unmeaning. For, bearing in mind how Descartes included under thinking all modes of sentiency, we may say that the fuller form reveals what is true but not generally recognized, that the substantive verb always carries with it the notion of thought *in* the subject of which it is predicated. This is obvious with regard to the first person, "I am;" for to say that a man can himself separate the notion of his being from the notion of his sentiency is absurd. But surely it is no less true of the second person, "thou art;" for though a poet may address a mountain or a statue, by the very hypothesis of personification he attributes sentiency to the subject. And it can scarcely be contended that the inflection of the third person wholly changes the meaning of the verb. In

other words, our notion of being is always and necessarily that of conscious being. Our first recognition of existence is in the form of life; and we only delude ourselves when we fancy that we eliminate life from our notion of objects around us. At any rate, this, the knowledge that I am alive, or the fact that I am conscious, is, in the mind of the simplest as well as profoundest, the one point so certain that it serves as a standard by which to judge all others. Now this only amounts to saying that our first and elementary recognition of existence is in the form of life. It may be, and doubtless is true, that no baby knows, or can be correctly said to feel that he is alive, until he opens his mouth and is astonished by the noise that he makes, or till he unfolds blank, meaningless eyes to the wonder of light. But no one will venture to say that in either instance he learns anything whatever of a world outside of him. We cannot be far wrong in thinking that he is simply roused to a dim, inarticulate, unrecorded and irrecoverable sense of indefinite life. The feeling, therefore, that we are alive is the prime, continuous, and fundamental perception which gives content to all others. We may talk about eliminating consciousness and forming an abstract idea of being; but it is only talk, nothing more. We never use the substantive verb without attributing some sort of life definite, or indefinite, to its subject. The first fact of existence, and the only one of which we have such an immediate

cognition, that in it subject and object are one, is, if not living substance, at least the phenomenon of life.

But how do we know that anything else exists beyond the life we realize in ourselves? Says Commonsense "Seeing's believing; but feeling has no fellow; I see them, and feel them, and hear them, and taste them, and smell them; therefore I know that a world of things exists around me." This argument is not to be despised; it is genuine and sound; irrefutable by any amount of metaphysical subtlety. But the question does not concern the existence of those visions, or feelings or sounds, or tastes, or smells. They are indisputable. Nor, again, does it affect the existence of real causes for them. But what it does touch is the *nature* of those causes. And if it be said that they are caused by an unliving substance, a dead matter, which is fundamentally different from the mode of existence which we know in ourselves, the assertion is one for which no tittle of proof can be found.

It may not perhaps be wholly unnecessary here to remind some readers that the doctrine of Bishop Berkeley has been persistently mistaken on this point. For it has been supposed that he denied the existence of the external world, and thus for a pedantic whim insulted the common sense of humanity. Of course he never dreamt of doing anything of the kind. Indeed, he rather believed it to be his mission to vindicate common sense against the far-fetched explanations of philosophers. Never did he for a moment treat the

external world as an unreal dream. He constantly insisted, rather, that the question he discussed concerned only the underlying basis or cause of the external manifestations that affect us; a question of which common sense is for the most part entirely oblivious; but in regard to which it easily suffers itself to be grievously deluded. As a clear understanding of the position thus generally indicated is becoming absolutely essential to any calm estimate of the apparently materialistic bearings of recent biological theories, a few words of exposition from one, who has felt the pressure of these questions but who makes no pretence to profound or original research, may not be without their use to the class of readers alluded to above.

Engaged in my work, and needing to note the passage of time, I look at the clock, and am straightway conscious of a complex sensation, accompanied by certain thoughts. I am conscious of a sensation of a circular form, and of a white surface distinguished by black marks. I am conscious also, perhaps, of an uncomfortable feeling that time is flying rapidly, and that only a few moments of certain allotted hours are left to me. For I gave myself three hours—from ten to one o'clock—for a particular purpose; and now the clock tells me that it is half-past twelve. "Tells me!" I cannot help imputing an intentional meaning to the clock-face; and the lively figure of speech ordinarily adopted is only a fair expression of

what the clock is generally supposed to do. I can, of course, on reflection, easily convince myself that the whole significance of the object—all notion of the twelve hours, and of the sixty minutes, and of the time that remains to me—is not in the clock at all, but in myself. Yet I find it requires very considerable effort to separate that round white face and those black marks outside of me, from the impression of the time of day which I feel within me. So prone are we to predicate of things outside of us the attributes of life, while yet we profess to conceive of them as dead. But let us suppose this error discovered and corrected. In contemplating the clock in itself, then, we have got rid of all notion of time—of all significance, which, on reflection, we find to be due to living association of ideas, and which we are quite sure is in us and not in the clock itself. All that is left now is a circular white space with black marks on it. This much, at least, it may be urged, is clearly outside of us. And yet if it is so, the clock must certainly be alive. For what do we mean by "white?" We mean a certain feeling or sensation which we associate with the word. Thus, if I mention the word, you can recall the sensation; and if I hold up a white cloth before you, you may say, "Yes, that is what I mean," because you recognise the sensation of whiteness which is revived. But if the cloth be fairly opaque, and I hold it up between you and the sun-light, then it excites no sensation of whiteness, but seems as nearly as possible

black. Yet the cloth itself is the same, and the whiteness or blackness is in the observer. My interlocutor, however, being a man of strong common sense, may catch me up sharply, and say, "No; the blackness or whiteness depends on the incidence of the light, and is still at the surface of the cloth." To which I should reply that the *cause* of the sensation of whiteness may undoubtedly be at the surface of the cloth; but the very mention of the light shows that the whiteness itself is in our eyes, or rather in the living self at the other end of the optic nerve. And therefore, when we apply the epithet "white" to our clock-face, we describe not what that object is in itself, but the sensation which it excites in us.

In other words, every act of perception involves two factors,—a perceiving subject and a perceived object. But we have no right whatever to invest either of these factors separately with the whole value of the two brought into conjunction. When we ourselves are gone away from the object, we know that our memory lacks the vividness and "outness" of the present sensation. And if the one factor, when removed from conjunction with the other, is modified by the separation, so is the other. We cannot logically leave the object invested with those sensations which it indeed produced in us, but which were a part of ourselves and not of it. For that which is acknowledged to be an effect produced on a living susceptibility cannot possibly be left behind when the living

susceptibility is removed. Of course, in the language of common sense, the clock-face is white when left alone in the deepest darkness, equally as when, illumined by the lamp, it warns us of the flight of time. But then the language of common sense is not, and need not be, exhaustively accurate. In the present instance it roughly expresses the indubitable fact, that the clock-face will retain its power of exciting, under certain conditions, the sensation of whiteness in our minds. Yet, for the purpose of our present argument, it is of the highest importance to fix in our minds the exact truth, which is this; that what we leave behind us when we take our candle and go to bed, is *not*, in the full significance of the words, a white clock-face, but something which, if we come back again with a light, will again awaken in us the sensation of the present moment.

It is obvious that the same reasoning would be equally applicable, not only to the round form and to the black figures, but also to the tick of the pendulum, which affects an entirely different sense. Some difficulty may be felt in realizing that the hardness and smoothness which we perceive through touch, are just as much in ourselves as is the white colour, and incapable of existence unless in the actual contact of our hands. But as this would necessitate a discussion of impenetrability, which may be better approached presently from another point of view, I shall best consult economy of space, without injury to ultimate com-

pleteness, by assuming now that the argument exemplified in the above illustration is applicable to all the senses alike. Let not the drift, however, be mistaken. The common sense of humanity is right enough in insisting on the reality of the external world. And all that our argument amounts to, so far, is this,—that our sensation is one thing, and its cause or occasion another; and farther, that simple sensation does not tell us what that cause is. If we ask what causes our sensation of whiteness in looking at the clock, we have no right to answer "white colour;" for the epithet expresses a sensation which must be in us, and cannot possibly be out of us. If, then, the cause be not white colour, what is it?

As simple sensation cannot answer, science has taken the matter in hand. By a minute observation of innumerable sensations, and by elaborate calculations and reasonings founded upon them, physical philosophers propose to reduce all our perceptions, and everything else about us, to a system of molecular mechanics. I am not going to complain of this proposal, or to anathematize its materialistic tendency or method. The method *ought* to be materialistic; the more so the better; for that is only another name for precise observation and accurate inference. But as to the tendency, we shall see. To my mind, to accuse molecular mechanics of a materialistic tendency, is about as reasonable as it would have been to accuse the first aeronaut who ventured to explore the clouds, of a

voyage into outer darkness. In good time we shall all come through to the other side. Only let us go deep enough; only let us get hold of our molecules and atoms—if we can. There is no fear of the result. But, meanwhile, I venture to suggest as the next step in my argument, that while simple sensation has nothing to tell us about its cause; except that it is not ourselves; physical research, so far as it has gone, gives us a cause which is not only nothing like the effect, but totally inadequate to account for it.

Let me illustrate what is meant. Looking at the clouds of sunset, what wonderful visions we sometimes enjoy,—castle, and spire, and city, palaces resplendent with gold and purple, fiery caves and gorgeous mountains. To the child they present a fairy-land quite sufficient to confirm the adventures of Jack at the top of his bean-stalk. And the little seer ponders how daintily his foot would tread the golden floors, and what supreme lordship he would feel, enthroned on those shining peaks. If then some remorseless iconoclast of romance were to carry him away in a balloon, and, favoured by the winds, were to plunge him into the world on which he dotes, how bitterly disappointed the child would be to find his beloved vision melt away into dismal damps, white ghostly mists, with no power but to baffle, and blind, and chill! No doubt, if he should pass right through into the boundless light beyond, his confidence would be restored, and his joy redoubled. But no explanation

would enable him to identify in his consciousness the splendid vision either above or below, with the dull molecules of choking fog into which he had been plunged. So, when science takes us children of a larger growth, and to exhibit to us the secret of colour, plunges us into a mist of vibrating molecules or atoms, we find it impossible to identify in consciousness the notion of vibrations with the phenomena of experience. It may be we shall pass through the mist some day, and know the eternal boundless life which it, so to speak, refracts and reflects. But not in trembling atoms do we, or shall we ever find any adequate explanation of the glorious visible world.

Suppose yourself to be looking up, not at the clouds, but at a palace ceiling illuminated with brilliant colours. No minute examination at the top of a ladder will do for us here what we supposed the balloon voyage to have affected for the child. However we may fly through the clouds, we are quite incapable yet of carrying our consciousness through a coat of paint. But science professes fully to explain to us the delight of our eyes. We have all heard in these times of the ether and its wavelets, which, vibrating billions of times in a second, carry everywhere the glory of light. We all understand that these ethereal wavelets, impinging upon molecules of pigment, have part of their movements absorbed, and part reflected in various degrees, according to the peculiar nature of the pigment employed. But as action and re-action are equal, we

must suppose the etherial wavelets which are thus turned violently back in their course to affect the molecules with their own motions. And indeed according to this theory, which, so far as it goes, I do not for a moment doubt, the only reason that can be given for the different colours of molecules is their adaptability to absorb or reflect a few billion vibrations more or a few billion vibrations less in any given second of time. We must conceive, then, that the superficial molecules of our illuminated ceiling are kept in a constant state of agitation under the beating waves of the light.

Now, as Milton's imagination reduced his unmanageable host of devils to pigmies in order that they might be squeezed into the Pandemonium, we may venture to reduce our own more estimable persons in thought to a minuteness beyond the range of microscopic perception. If, at the inner end of the optic nerve, there are brain molecules capable of marking time to the wavelets of light, we may suppose our whole consciousness to be concentrated in such a molecule. Having then reduced ourselves to a size indefinitely smaller than that of the smallest perceptible animalcule, we may insinuate ourselves amongst the agitated particles of our illuminated ceiling, and thus follow up to its last retreat the mystery of colour. But it may fairly be questioned whether the result would answer our expectations, any more than the child's investigation of the sunset clouds would be in accordance with his.

Surrounded on every side by perceptibly dancing molecules, of whose actual motions we were conscious, we might feel as though enveloped in a cloud of dust agitated by the wind, or as though rolled amongst pebbles shaken by the beat of waves on the beach, but as to the efficient and formative cause of the brilliant vision we had seen below, we should be as much bewildered as the child plunged into the cloud.

This is only one illustration out of innumerable others which might be given to show the impossibility of realizing in consciousness the explanation offered by molecular mechanics of the phenomena of sensation. And nothing is really an explanation which cannot be realized as such in consciousness. What we want is a cause, out of which we can rationally educe the effect. When, for instance, we are told that the perception of distance is given partly by the muscular sense accompanying the adjustment of the axes of the eyes, partly by association of certain directions of lines and various degrees of dimness or clearness, with experience of touch and motion, this, so far as it goes, is an entirely adequate explanation. No question is here involved of the ultimate constitution of the outer or the inner world. But the phenomena being assumed, every one, by the exercise of a little reflection, is able to realize this explanation in his own consciousness, and rationally to connect that muscular sense and the experience of touch with his perception of distance. For every one, when his attention is called to it, knows that a

muscular effort is required for the adjustment of the eyes to various distances; and even after long experience illusory appearances of distance or nearness occasionally illustrate the uncertainty of sight apart from the interpretations of the other sense. This, then, I call an adequate explanation so far as it goes; one which can be realized in consciousness.

But with the explanation of sensation by molecular mechanics the case is far otherwise. For physical research, rightly pursuing its materialistic method, lands us in a dead, inert substance, called matter, which, though utterly soulless and meaningless in itself, does, nevertheless, by its shakings and rumblings, produce in our conscious selves the most beautiful visions and exalted emotions. Now, I do not dispute the vibratory theory of light; and, of course, that of sound is indisputable. But what does it amount to in either case? Simply to this, that when we carefully and minutely examine the external phenomena inseparable from our consciousness of sight or sound, we find that they resolve themselves into other phenomena having the form of infinitesimal vibrations, which it is quite impossible rationally to connect with the consciousness that gives them all their interest.* I repeat then that while simple

* Perhaps it may be thought that in the case of sound its identity with vibrations may be more easily realized. But I put it to any one to whom the Hallelujah Chorus utters the joy of heaven, or for whom a sonata of Beethoven's gives a voice to the unutterable, can he make it seem real to himself that his mind is invaded by mere air waves?

sensation has nothing to tell us about its cause, except that it is not ourselves, physical research, so far as it has gone, gives us a cause which is not only nothing like the effect, but totally inadequate to account for it. Science has brought us into the cloud, and this is very different from the vision that prompted our voyage of discovery. But we cannot stop here; and science or something else will ultimately take us through to the other side.

Physical research boasts its dependence on observation, which is only another word for the industrious and accurate employment of the senses. And its history has been to a large extent a process of correction, ever approximating to, but, in the nature of the case, incapable of attaining absolute truth. If then the last correction has given me a system of molecular mechanics, have I not a right to speculate on the probability of some further correction still? My simple senses, for instance, tell me as I look down the road that there is a figure in a red cloak half a mile away. Dr. Tyndall's much more subtle perceptions, aided by prisms, electric lamps, screens, and I know not what, enable him to correct the simplicity of my sensations, and to assure me that, whatever may be the case with the figure and the cloak, the red colour is certainly *not* half a mile away, but here only, in my eyes or in my optic lobes. He further corrects my observations, if I rightly understand him, by informing me that the presence of this colour here is due to the

existence of molecules there which vibrate in such a fashion as to absorb the violet and gold rays while they repel and reflect the red. And, still farther, I learn that the medium of communication between me and those distant molecules is an attenuated "jelly," called ether, which is so extremely subtle that it pervades all substances, and which is liable to vibrations of a stupendous and unimaginable velocity. It is all, then, a matter of molecules. The cloak, the ether, my retina, optic nerve and lobes—all are reduced to a system of molecular machinery so devised as to reflect, transmit, or receive vibrations of matter which run throughout the whole chain.

Now, I do not in the least dispute the correction. I am unable to carry out the investigation for myself; but I am perfectly satisfied with the evidence of eminent men, that when my rough summary of sensation is closely examined, other phenomena unobserved by me are discovered, and that these at length reduce themselves to phenomena of molecular agitation. Farther, at no point in this chain of vibrations, not even the point most deeply buried in the brain, is it possible to conceive this molecular agitation converted into anything other than material movement, or resistance to movement. Let any one in thought follow up the ethereal vibrations to their last flutter in the inmost recesses of the brain; and let him try to form a clear idea of what happens there. It is useless to say that he will not try; that it is a mystery which he

leaves alone. Because in the very act of refusing, he does conceive the chain of vibrations to come to a dead stop, and something infinitely different, utterly incommensurable with them to take their place. For my part, having submitted so far to the teaching of physical philosophers, I am constrained to go farther, and admit, that to my mind, material movement can produce nothing but material movement; that the feeling produced by molecular vibration must itself be a form of molecular vibration; and, in fine, I must concede to Professor Huxley, that "thought is as much a function of matter as motion is." But then the whole significance of the concession depends upon the meaning that we attach to the word 'matter.'

For if any one should straightway convict me of "gross and brutal materialism," I would beg him to remember that this conclusion is only an approximate correction of the vague notions with which we began. My "simple senses" informed me incorrectly about their method of operation. They told me of a red colour half-a-mile distant across a vacant interval. But the more cultivated senses of scientific people, aided by delicate instruments, resolve these appearances into phenomena of agitated molecules. I am thankful for the correction; but if too much should be made of these molecules, I have a right to urge that there is no finality here. This correction may need correcting; and these vibrating molecules may turn out to be something very different from what they seem. In

fact, they must do so; for the common notion entertained of them, even by some scientific men, compresses a whole world of absurdity and contradiction into every point of space. But if so, it is conceivable that through the word "matter" in the above assertion of Professor Huxley's, we may find an issue into the clear upper air beyond the cloud of materialism.

Let us try to think what we mean by matter, or at any rate what we suppose ourselves to mean. When speaking above of the clock, and of the absence of any information in sensation itself as to the nature of its own cause, we observed that to most minds touch would seem to be an exception to the other senses, and to give an immediate perception of its cause. The reason is that impenetrability and matter seem almost convertible terms. But let us ask what we mean by impenetrability. If I thump the table at which I am writing, something resists me, and my fist can go no farther. If I push an oar through water, I feel the same thing in a less degree; but the water as a mass is certainly not impenetrable. If I wave my hands in the air, I experience a slight disturbance around them, though there is no sensible impediment to their movement. But of course, the property of impenetrability belongs to all three forms of matter alike. The only difference which we recognize, lies in the degree of possible flux or mobility characterizing the molecules in relation to one another. Thus the table is so compact that no part of it will perceptibly move

out of the way to make room for my fist. But water and air are so constituted, that the parts which I push yield their place with more or less readiness to make room for me. And why do they move away? The property of impenetrability supplies the reason; because no two particles of matter can occupy the same place at the same time. In the mass all matter is penetrable; for the table, or for that matter solid stone, would yield to a sledge-hammer or a saw. But still no part of the hammer or saw would ever occupy the same space as any portion of wood or stone at the same moment of time. We shall get a better notion then of the one property generally regarded as essential to our hypothetical "matter," if we call that property, not impenetrability, but the exclusive occupation of space. Besides, the former term prematurely raises the question as to the nature of the difference between the plainly penetrable mass, and the supposed impenetrable molecule; while the exclusive occupation of space is a notion which we easily attach to all quantities of matter, great or small. Extension or occupation of space is in fact the only property which Descartes allowed to be essential to matter. And extension of course implies *exclusive* occupation; for if two portions of matter could be packed into space of the dimensions of one only, it is clear that one of them, or portions of each would occupy no space at all; that is, would lose the essential property of matter, or in other words, would be annihilated. While, there-

fore, various kinds of matter may differ in shape, colour, weight, smell, taste and feeling, everything which can be regarded as matter at all, must occupy some space. Descartes went farther, and maintained that all space was occupied by matter of some kind, or in other words, that matter was infinitely extended. And it must be confessed that the progress of astronomical discovery has gone far to confirm his view. For, to say nothing of the revelations which more powerful telescopes have made of the unimagined vastness of the universe, the vibratory theory, which best explains the phenomena of light, and also the slow retardation in the movements of the heavenly bodies would certainly imply the existence of subtle ether diffused through space.

Assuming then that the one essential property of matter is its exclusive occupation of space, we have to choose between two alternative opinions, one or other of which is absolutely involved in the definition we have thus laid down. For matter must be either continuous and divisible beyond any conceivable limit, or it is atomic, that is, composed of indivisible particles with void spaces between them. The former view was ostensibly held by Descartes; but as, according to him, matter and space are inseparable if not identical, it is possible he may have anticipated more completely than we have thought the modern method of expressing idealism in the terms of materialism. The atomic theory is, I suppose, more generally held in our own

day. Yet it is easy to show that as an explanation of the ultimate nature of the external world both views are equally untenable, inasmuch as they land us at once in absurdity. And the contradictions which ensue are quite sufficient to prove that we have made a mistake somewhere; most probably in the value we have assigned to matter. For instance, the familiar phenomena of expansion through heat and contraction through cold are quite inconsistent with any possible modification of Descartes' theory of the inseparability of matter and space. We must all agree that if a bar of iron is lengthened by heat to the extent of a quarter of an inch, it is not by the creation or generation of new iron for the purpose. Or if the bar be contracted to the same extent, it is still certain, on this theory, that every point of iron which had occupied a point of space before must occupy an equivalent point of space still. It is impossible therefore to avoid the inference that some indefinitely minute constituent portions of the iron must be driven off one from another, or compressed together in the act of expansion or contraction. Of course Descartes provides for this, by the influx or efflux of a subtler form of matter, which occupies or vacates the interstices of the iron according to the presence or absence of heat. But, to say nothing of the impossibility of allowing that on such a theory any differences of density or rarity can exist, it is clear that if heat be a mode of motion, as is now universally believed, the above explanation ceases

to be an explanation at all. For the agitation of the particles in the iron must be communicated to the (so called) subtler matter which enters its pores. This matter also must be expanded by the heat; and then what is to fill the interstices which are thus occasioned? A still more subtle matter? But then the same objection would apply again, and so on *ad infinitum*. Farther, on this theory, according to which matter and space are inseparable, differences of density would be impossible; and if so, whatever value Descartes' magnificent cosmological dream may have for astronomers,—and for aught I know it may yet supersede the common notions of gravitation,—at any rate his notion of matter, unless it is capable of that spiritual interpretation above hinted at, is quite incongruous with the uses to which he puts it. For in a universe, such as he conceived, of continuous and infinitely extended matter, the only possible motion was vortical; because that is the only motion which does not require any point of matter to move out of the way of any other; and this, as every point of infinite space was already exclusively occupied, would of course have been impossible. But when he proceeds to evolve out of these vortical motions the complex movements and myriad forms of the actual world, he handles matter as an idea only, without any regard to the mechanical conditions he has laid down. For, to build up his world he requires three different kinds of material; one sort consisting of matter in its original state; a second

formed of finer elements constituted by the attrition of the vortices, and finding their way to centres, where they are gathered into orbs of light or the candescent germs of planets; and a third kind arising out of the accretion of these finer elements into coarser particles, which, being thrown out to the surface of each fiery, revolving mass, are either dissipated, and return to their original state, as at the surface of the sun; or revolve in dark clouds which are hardened into a solid encasement, as in the planets. His endeavour to show how these different kinds of material would be ground out and assorted in the revolutions of his vortices is no doubt a wonderful effort of imagination; yet the very notion of particles, to say nothing of their finer division, or coarser accretion, is quite inconsistent with the continuity of matter. For particles imply division, and division means discontinuity. Again the degrees of tenuity or density, for which Descartes' theory provides by the pulverization or accretion of the vortical matter, are a contradiction to the fundamental assumption of the inseparable conjunction of matter and space. Take, for instance, his idea of the accretion by pressure of his most subtle and luminiferous particles. This either means that those particles were squeezed closer together so as to adhere; or it means nothing. But since they were already in actual contact, each point of space being occupied by a point of matter, the supposed process is simply inconceivable. The subtlest ether, if it is continuous, occupies the

whole of the space in which it lies; that is, there is no point of the space which is not occupied by a point of matter. But the hardest iron or steel can do no more than this; and, therefore, on such a theory, it is impossible to give any account of its superior density.

The more favoured doctrine in modern times, however, accepts the other alternative mentioned above; and teaches that matter is ultimately constituted of minute indivisible particles, which are separated one from another by spaces immeasurably small, yet still definite and real. The attraction or repulsion of these atoms between themselves is supposed to explain the phenomena of chemical combination. Their agitation in their narrow orbits constitutes heat; the repulsion occasioned by this agitation explains expansion; and the same agitation, if sufficiently intense, may be communicated to the atoms of the ether, thus creating light. There is, of course, very much to be said for such a theory. In particular the doctrine of chemical equivalents, and the curious fact that when bodies unite in more than one proportion these proportions rise by exact multiples of the first, would certainly appear to point to the atomic theory in some form. But in what form? That is precisely the question at issue. When I find that Nitrogen being 14, the successive proportions of Oxygen which will unite with it are 8, 16, 24, 32 and 40, I confess it apparently goes far to justify my saying that one atom of Nitrogen may unite with one, two, three or more atoms of Oxygen.

That is, there seems strong reason for believing that the force or forces represented by the name Oxygen must ultimately be distributed at a number of definite centres, which, as a matter of fact are never, so far as we know, disintegrated. But when molecular chemistry undertakes to say what those centres are, and assures me that they are hard little kernels of a substance fundamentally different from, and incommensurable with the life which is the only mode of being that I certainly and directly know, then I must beg leave to demur. I might do so on the ground that the physical philosopher is here asserting what he cannot possibly know—precisely the crime which he is always imputing to Theologians. But I go farther. I say he is asserting what is absurd, unthinkable, impossible.

For in the spaces between these ultimate atoms, there exists either some matter supposed to be more subtle than the atoms, or absolutely no matter at all. If the former alternative be taken, this is simply the continuity of matter over again. Every point of space is occupied by its own point of matter, which positively excludes any other from occupying the same space. The atmosphere in the interspaces therefore must be equally dense with the atoms which they surround, and the distinction between them disappears. But if there is absolutely no matter between the atoms, then all their effects, one upon another, must be exerted across a void—that is, through a medium of

nothingness; or, in other words, the presence of force does not necessarily imply the presence of matter; and the only reason for assuming the latter as anything different from force is given up. The size of the interval makes no difference at all to the argument. Whether that interval be the 92-billionth of an inch, or the 92 million miles, or thereabouts, between the earth and the sun, if force can pass through, that is, can exist in, a space absolutely void of all matter; then the inseparability of matter and force is altogether given up. Yet the only reason for our belief in any matter different in substance from the subtle essence of our own consciousness is an inference from the presence of force, and from its apparent distribution at definite centres. Force, it is argued, must be exerted by something, and must act upon something. Very true; but if you infer from this that the presence of force implies always the presence of a sustaining material substance, the one essential quality of which is the exclusive occupation of space; then I say your own atomic theory contradicts you. I put before you the conception of two atoms; and I draw round each of them a circle. These circles touch at the middle point between the two; and I ask you what exists there? On the theory, you are bound to reply, nothing but force. If the atoms repel each other, their contrary forces meet here and struggle here. If the atoms attract each other, the attractive force of each meets here and lays hold of that of the other.

Now, if force can exist here, at the tangential point of the two circles, without any matter at all in which it inheres, why is not the same thing possible at the centres as well?

It has been acknowledged that the atomic theory, in *some form*, is plainly suggested by the phenomena of chemical proportions. But at the same time, when this theory takes the materialistic shape which we have repudiated, it becomes manifestly inconsistent with the very phenomena which suggested it. For in this view, the only difference between a mixture such as air, and a compound such as carbonic acid or water, consists in a greater or less degree of contiguity between atoms which can never coalesce. Now, atoms ranged side by side, or in groups, must exert each its own independent force; and it seems inconceivable, that in this way two substances—like oxygen and hydrogen—could produce a third so utterly unlike both as water. While, if we might be allowed to think of our atoms as others think of the interspaces; that is, if we might be allowed to regard them as simply the elementary phenomena of force, the notion of any absolutely *exclusive* occupation of space is unnecessary. We may suppose these centres capable of wholly interpenetrating one another, and of thus producing an entirely new mode of force, or, in common language, a new substance.*

* There is a very curious and interesting letter on this subject by Prof. Faraday in the *Philosophical Magazine* for Feb. 1844.

But I am very far from suggesting that we can find in mere force, as commonly understood, an adequate solution of the mystery of matter. For our notion of force seems to be engendered partly by our own sense of effort in muscular exertion; partly also by our imaginative treatment of the resistance which our efforts encounter in surrounding objects. We first of all impute to the external movements which resist or overcome us something like the "nisus" realized in ourselves; we then associate the idea with all observed sequences; and finally,—I am speaking of course, not of any individual experience, but of the genesis of the notion,—finding that the certainty and unfeeling regularity of these sequences appear to exclude the immediate action of will or conscious purpose, we abstract these, and there remains the really irrational conception of unliving effort, a nisus which involves no endeavour, a law which enforces itself. We shall never find the inmost shrine of existence in the presence of an idolon like this. I do not in the least deny the reality of force, any more than that of a substantial external world. But I maintain that both forces and forms, so far from lending themselves to "gross materialism," rather fascinate us with their shadowed hints of a mystery behind them both, far mightier than our will, and I will dare to add, more keenly living than our life.

Some of the threads which hang from many a ragged end of thought in the present essay we shall

endeavour to take up hereafter. Meantime we have seen how that strange, keen evanescent spark of life which burns within can play as fantastic tricks with sordid surroundings as the gleam of a torch with the shadows of a cave. The soul is creative in very early days; and whatever it may gain from the outer world it returns a hundredfold in the dreams and affections and ideals which it projects. Objective circumstances there must be, to awaken the energies of the soul. But those circumstances, when association has endeared them, are no longer merely a blank array of mechanical forces. They are enriched and brightened, irradiated with many an eloquent suggestion of half-forgotten joys and sorrows, which are the result of experience, indeed, but an experience in which the elaborating and transforming powers of mind play far the largest part. But when the leaders of modern thought, tired of the bewilderment in which poetic sentiment and mystical imagination ended, abandoned all assumptions and set themselves to note precisely what could be seen and felt and heard, with a view to marking the connections between phenomena thus ascertained; it seemed to many that the days of mystery and romance were gone, and that the grand invariable order revealed must compel the dethronement of will and spirit and life beneath the apathetic rule of mechanical law. Yet increased powers of observation showed the hardest external facts to be merely a series of dissolving views. In geological

perspective granite mountains melted into a fiery mist; to the astronomer's eye the steadfast order of the heavens became an unbeginning and endless evolution; and all the once inscrutable wonders of light and heat and organic life, followed up with eager determination, were lost in the infinitesimal vibrations of a molecular world. Is this the end? Do we not in the emotional, imaginative, and moral wealth of human life, get out of the universe immeasurably more than can be potentially contained in mere mechanical movement? Granting the formal correctness of every result, have we not to correct some fundamental error in the significance we assigned to the original terms of the problem? If self be living and not-self dead, we are brought to a dead lock. But if the life, in which we come to know ourselves and the world, embrace both self and not-self too; and if the ultimate elementary phenomena of nature be the simplest subjective forms through which the objective phase of Universal Energy is translated into our consciousness; it may be perfectly true that the reality of existence is inexpressible; but worship, spiritual aspiration, and that loyalty of soul to Infinite Power which is the true essence of faith, are still, and must be for ever, the noblest energies of man.

It is impossible to justify, as I hope to do hereafter, the view which I would venture to take of the bearing of these conclusions on the future of religion. If by substance we mean that which is and must be, then we

know that life is; but we do not know that anything else is. And the phenomena of the physical world are at least conceivably explicable on the hypothesis of ultimate centres of energy; which centres may, for aught we know, be, to our consciousness, the elementary phenomenal definition of a universal spiritual Power. Life we know; Force we feel; nothing more. The notion of a dead substance is an idolon of sense, engendered by the resistance of phenomena to our will. For we cannot help feeling that immaterial angels,—if we may be allowed the conception,—or any forms of finite consciousness, if they were made by Infinite Power to move, or have the idea of moving, in definite paths,—say in straight lines or circles,—would inevitably think of the limiting forces about them, as solid walls shutting in their ways. And so, it may be that the physical laws which bound the efforts of our will engender in our minds the notion of a dead substance, foreign to, and incommensurable with, spiritual being. Farther, if this notion, when closely examined, turns out to be not only incapable of proof, but self-contradictory and absurd, I am not much troubled by the impossibility of propounding, at present, on the basis of a spiritual substance, any comprehensive and entirely adequate theory of the universe. Nor do I share the sublime indifference of "know-nothings" in philosophy, for whom the end of inquiry is the demonstration of ignorance, and who, like the disagreeable operative in "Hard Times," are perpetually remarking

that existence is "aw' a muddle." I know that I live; I am sure that death never engendered life. That I move in the midst of a world which is not myself, but infinitely greater and better than myself, I am compelled, whether I will or not, to believe. I only resist the invasion of that divine world of will, feeling, beauty and power, in which I live, and move, and have my being, by the spectre of a dead abomination which is entirely the creation of false inference.

If we can prove nothing, we can at least disprove what threatens the annihilation of faith. True, the faith that we save may be no sectarian's creed. Yet surely it is something dearer far to every sect alike; the loyalty of the soul to that inspiration from the Unsearchable, which is the ultimate motive power of progress. What, then, I gain by the view for which I earnestly contend is this: that no material phenomena, be they what they may, can shame or fright those sentiments of Divine Life and Love which are engendered through the heart. All forms of finite existence may, for aught I care, be reduced to modes of motion; but motion itself has become to me only the phenomenal manifestation of the energy of an infinite Life in which it is a joy to be lost. To me the doctrine of an eternal continuity of development has no terrors; for, believing matter to be in its ultimate essence spiritual, I see in every cosmic revolution a "change from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." I can look down the uncreated, unbeginning past with-

out the sickness of bewildered faith. I want no silent dark eternity in which no world was; for I am a disciple of One who said, "*My Father worketh hitherto.*" My sense of eternal order is no longer jarred by the sudden appearance in the universe of a dead, inane substance, foreign to God and spiritual being. And if, with a true insight, I could stand so high above the world as to take any comprehensive survey of its unceasing evolutions; here a nebula dawning at the silent fiat "be light," there the populous globe, where the communion of the many with the One brings the creature back to the Creator; I am sure that the oneness of the vision, so far from degrading, would unspeakably elevate my sense of the dignity and blessedness of created being. I have no temptation, therefore, to join in cursing the discoverer who tracks the chain of divine forces by which finite consciousness has been brought to take its present form; because I know he can never find more than that which was in the beginning, and is, and ever shall be—the "power of an endless life."

Finally, the strange tearful longing with which the heart is touched by the majesty or tenderness of nature, finds, on this view, not only a worthier, but a more real explanation than is possible on any other. Music is no longer mere inanimate air; mountains no longer heaps of stupid stone. The vibrations, whether of air or ether, are to me but the form in which the power and sympathy of creative life are phenomenally mani-

fested to me, as the ripple lapping on the sand brings near the ocean beyond. For, if the earth were only spiritless matter, and our bodies are only spiritless matter, while the soul is something imported into them for the purpose of galvanizing them into seeming life; then surely there is neither reason nor significance in the power which is exerted over us by natural scenery. I remember standing in the land of all liquid splendours—Norway—beneath a glorious waterfall, where the mountain weaves out of ten thousand tons of water a fluttering veil to deck its rocky hardihood with intangible grace. I see the sinuous motion of the rocket-like patterns which shoot downward over the airy texture. I mark the diamond spangles which work strange wonders with the simple sunbeams. I hear the crash and shout that greet the rocks below. I watch the headlong rush of the tumbling billows,—like madness, like mirth, like laughter, like rage,—uttering all human passions with the voice of a thousand trumpets in the leap from the crag to the lake. Is there not something of a universality, an infinity here, which at once baffles and fascinates the mind? Why do your eyes fill with tears as you gaze? and why is your heart drawn out with unutterable desire? Why do you turn back again and again, as though it were better to plunge into the wild water and be dissolved in its great joy than to pass away and forget?

Why? I turn to where a mountain flower trembles tearfully in a cranny of the rock. Mechanically my hand is raised to seize it; and there float into my mind the words—

> "Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies;
> Hold you there, root and all in my hand,
> Little flower; but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all,—and all in all,—
> I should know what God and man is."

II.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF IGNORANCE.

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Arguments such as that of the preceding essay are commonly met with the remark, that they prove too much for the purpose of those by whom they are most frequently urged. It may be easy to shew that the notion of a material substance, as commonly understood, involves self-contradictory absurdities; but the substitution of centres of force does little to enlighten us. Nor is the suggestion of a Universal Life a spell sufficiently potent to clear up the mystery of existence. For if by Life we mean Mind as known to us, Mind, whose consciousness is generated by experience of the contrast between self and not-self, we are speedily landed in contradictions, compared with which even the atomic theory is rational and consistent. To talk of an Omnipresent Mind seems very much the same as though we were to speak of a Universal Man,—an idea which indeed some profess to entertain; but which, when the limitations necessarily involved in

personality are remembered, is seen to be no more rational than the notion of an infinite triangle. Of course, if we choose to attach to the word infinite a modified significance, and consider it as meaning greater than any known quantity, in that case we may speak of infinite mind, and of infinite triangles as well; but the latter would hardly be a more incongruous conception of the plan of the universe in space than the former would be of its ontological essence. But if, on the other hand, in suggesting a universal Life as the substance of all things, we do *not* mean mind as we know it; is not the phrase an unnecessary and deceptive substitute for the Universal Unknown? Such, at least, are some of the objections most likely to occur to many who would readily agree with the main argument of the preceding pages,—objections not so much against the reasoning as against its usefulness; protests, not against the destructive analysis, but against the constructive theory hinted. The intangible mystery which hides the essence of matter would be granted; but it would be insisted that the real issue is simply a despair of any knowledge beyond that of phenomena, with their relations of co-existence or succession.

On the other hand, there are always those who too readily imagine that when the professed knowledge of their opponents turns out to be ignorance, their own ignorance is thereby proved to be knowledge. For to their thinking, contending schools of philosophy are

like children playing see-saw at opposite ends of a plank, so that whatever depresses the one necessarily exalts the other; whereas the true point of analogy may be only this,—that both extremes are supported by the same plank, and when this breaks both alike come to the ground. Atheistic positivism and theological dogmatism, though they are at opposite poles, go through the same motions. Each rests on a mistaken interpretation of human nature; and each is weak through a defective philosophy of ignorance. The object of the present essay is to shew what is the relation of the views advanced concerning the mystery of matter to both extreme positions; and also what seems to the writer the true bearing on religious faith of any fair appreciation of man's inevitable ignorance. In pursuit of this purpose, we shall endeavour to find out, first of all, in what direction the Unknown lies, and by what faculties we approach it nearest. We shall then be able to shew that the nature of our ignorance is itself suggestive, and makes a way for the practical power over our hearts of a mystery that is confessedly unknown. We must leave to future pages any indication of the manner in which that practical power has been, and may continue to be, the most beneficent and ennobling influence in the history of man.

Speaking generally, the attitude of contemporary science implies a strong confidence that the whole apparent universe is finally interpretable in terms of

two ultimate phenomenal categories,— matter and motion. And this attitude is supposed, for the most part by unfriendly critics, but occasionally by physicists themselves, to be equivalent to the assertion of materialism. Now, it is not very easy to define materialism. But what I understand by it is a system of thought which assumes that, at any rate if we could carry our inquiries far enough, the universe is finally *explicable* on mechanical principles. Or, if this definition be erroneous, it may safely be assumed at the outset, without danger to the following argument; because if mechanical principles are not supposed finally to *explain* the world, materialism also has its fundamental mystery, which is by hypothesis not mechanical, as otherwise it would be explicable. And it is with this fundamental mystery that the philosophy of ignorance has to deal.

But assuming for a moment that there are extreme materialists, who would avow the position just defined, it is clear that this is something very different from any demonstrable conclusion of science. For it is one thing to say that special and complex phenomena may be interpreted; that is, may have their laws of coincidence and succession stated in terms of more general and simpler phenomena. But it is altogether another and a different thing to say that these latter are the final and only reality involved in existence. If I have a complex algebraical equation presented to me, involving several unknown quantities; by a sufficiency

of mathematical skill I may shew that it is ultimately reducible to terms of x and y. But that would not at all show that the significance of the equation is merely alphabetical. The values of x and y may be at present unknown, and are perhaps undiscoverable; yet this much, at least, is known,—that those values represent much more than the printed signs. In the complex problem of the universe, matter and motion are our x and y. But those only can be called materialists, who say that these terms have no further significance, or that they are of such a nature as to exclude the possibility of any transcendental value. It is against this position that such arguments as those already advanced are usually urged by the adherents of a spiritual philosophy. And though the result, if any, as yet established, amounts simply to a demonstration of ignorance; it is an ignorance welcome as the vastness of an unknown sea in the darkness of the night to the mariner who, when apparently driving upon an iron-bound coast, is suddenly whirled by a strong current through narrow straits into deep unsounded waters beyond.

Indeed, there can be little doubt, though the issue is not usually seen by religious people, that the establishment of the ultimate substantiality of atoms, or the proof of any theory which should give to the impenetrability of matter more than a phenomenal and conditional value, would necessarily be fatal to any spiritual idea of the universe, and must logically involve

atheism. For, taking the words "matter" and "spirit" in their ordinary conversational meaning, there are four theories as to their relations, one of which must needs be adopted, because they exhaust the possibilities of thought on the subject. Thus, (1.) we may regard matter and spirit as two separate and distinct substances, capable of mutual relations, but entirely incommensurable. This is the popular view,—tolerable only so long as the word substance is loosely understood. But (2.) we may suppose spirit to be a generalization of certain phenomena of matter; or (3.) we may treat matter as a phenomenon of spirit. Finally, we may insist (4.) that matter and spirit are equally phenomenal manifestations of one unknown substance.*

* By matter, in the ordinary use of the word, I suppose we mean whatever is cognizable by the senses, or would be so if their susceptibility were sufficiently increased. Molecules and atoms are not separately perceptible; but it is supposed they would be so if sight or touch were sufficiently acute. The luminiferous ether is not cognizable except in the form of vibrations of extreme intensity. But the material conception of it necessarily implies that if susceptibility of touch were indefinitely increased, ether might be (in a so-called vacuum, for instance) at least as palpable as air is now.

By spirit, again, in ordinary speech, we mean the mode of existence which is directly perceived in consciousness, apart from any intervention of the senses. The difference between the words spirit, mind, and soul, according to general usage, is apparently this,—the first suggests merely the notion of immaterial existence, while the second calls up more distinctly certain

Of these positions, the first alone necessarily involves the metaphysical idea of creation, that is the production of a positive something out of absolute nothingness; and this, which is its chief recommendation to those who think the life of Christianity to be essentially bound up with a pseudo-ontology, forms its hopeless condemnation in the eyes of most others. No one would now pretend to believe in the eternal existence of two fundamentally different and mutually exclusive substances. If therefore matter and spirit are equally substantial, and ultimately different in essence, one of them, and necessarily that one which is supposed to be in itself inert, must have been created out of nothing. But not only is such a conception, as has often been shown, incapable of realization in thought; it is, so far as it can be represented at all, inconsistent with devoutest Christian feeling concern-

powers of that existence,—as perception, judgment, &c.; and the third presents immaterial existence as the essential germ of individual character, and is therefore peculiarly connected with religious associations.

Force is a sort of amphibious word hovering between spirit and matter; but as its meaning to us is determined by the view which we adopt concerning the relations of these two, no discussion of it is necessary in this place.

It is difficult to say what is usually meant by substance. It ought to mean, as Spinoza says, that, the conception of which does not need the conception of anything else as its cause; in fact, that which is its own explanation. Roughly, it is taken to mean something which satisfies us, when our analysis reaches it, that there is nothing else inside of it.

ing the relation of the creature to the Creator. The time is surely now gone by for insisting that rightful Christian sentiment on such a subject must needs be conformed to the records of an ancient Hebrew generation. The happy spiritual influences which we trace up to the religious life of that divinely-gifted people are indeed of priceless value. But the questions which perplex modern faith would have been to them more impossible of apprehension than their unpronounceable shades of guttural aspiration are to us. On the other hand, in the history of the Church, those most sacred records which perpetuate, not theological wrangles, but phases of divine life, show that apostles, saints, and poets, have joined in ascribing to God alone true being and essential substance. From St. Paul who proclaimed to the Athenians that in God "we live and move and have our being," to Wesley who taught his congregations to sing—

> "In Thee we move ; all things of Thee
> Are full Thou source and life of all,

the language of devotion has always been more or less inspired by a mystic sense that the creature exists from moment to moment only by the continual exertion of divine power. But such a feeling is entirely incongruous with the attribution of any essentially separate being to the creature. Yet what we mean by *substance,* so far as we mean anything at all, is that which has its being in itself, so as to need no further

explanation. Now, whatever may have been the case with metaphysical theology, the language of the most fervent piety has always, by a true inspiration, denied this to everything but God. And therefore the existence of more than one substance, in any true sense of the word, is opposed not only to sound philosophy, but to devout feeling.

This conclusion can only be evaded by the self-contradictory supposition of two different orders of substance, the one being eternal and self-subsistent, the other dependent, and conditioned on the existence of the former. But of course this is only a disguised denial of any real substance, except that which is eternal. For that which subsists in something else is phenomenal, not substantial at all. On the creation theory, was matter at its first appearance an addition to the sum of being or was it not? If it was, then though by the hypothesis it was called into existence, and can be put out of existence by an almighty fiat, yet between the two periods of creation and annihilation it stands by itself, and has a being which is not in God, but is beyond and distinct from the divine nature. But such a thought is not only irrational: it is impious. For it attributes to the creature that majesty of essential Being, which, as in the names "Jehovah" and "I am," the devoutest hearts have always regarded as the supreme attribute of eternal God alone. But if, on the other hand, matter at its first appearance was not an addition to the sum of

being, then it was only a different mode of that which existed before; and though new phenomena were manifested, no new substance was created.

My object now is not to suggest what our true position with regard to those unanswerable questions should be; but only to show that the ordinary notion of creation, instead of being essential to Christianity, is really inconsistent with its spirit; and that religion has no interest in maintaining, what science and philosophy unite in condemning as irrational and absurd. But whatever view be taken of the interests of religion, no one, who with any discernment watches the signs of the times, can possibly suppose that the dogma of creation out of nothing will long survive the establishment of scientific doctrines like those of "continuity," or the correlation and conservation of forces. Ever since the days of Anaxagoras and Empedocles, the principle that out of nothing nothing can be made has been felt by most earnest thinkers to be a self-evident truth, which no hypothesis of miracle can over-ride. But now scientific teaching is bringing it home to every ordinary reader; and the time is not far distant when all will acknowledge that to say of the Eternal, to whom there is no before or after, that He made the earth out of nothing is as much a contradiction in terms, nay, is precisely the same contradiction, as though we should say of anything that it is and is not, in the same moment of time.

Yet the impossibility of maintaining this theory, if indeed that can be called a theory which is a mere expedient of thought, should not be any grief to the religious sentiment. For the deepest instincts of that sentiment point in a far different direction. The case however becomes very much more serious, if the real issue is the adoption of the second opinion mentioned above—that what we call mind is phenomenal, and only matter substantial. The form which this view generally takes at the present day is the atomic theory concerning the ultimate constitution of the world; a theory which was conceived long ago in the fruitful womb of Greek antiquity; which was chanted forth with strange wild beauty by the portentous genius of Lucretius; and then slumbered in comparative neglect for more than a thousand years, until a Manchester chemist declared it the master-key to the mystery of matter. The convenience of this atomic theory as an expedient of thought has been fully admitted in the previous essay, where I have also insisted on the ignorance which it veils. And they, who think that little is done if only ignorance is established, would do well to reflect on what, if it were anything more than an expedient of thought, the theory would really mean.

It is not often that any definite and real issue arises in the so-called conflict between religion and science. For Geology, Physiology and Historical Criticism have threatened or destroyed only particular

forms of religious opinion; while they have set the spirit of religion free to keep pace with the larger generalizations of modern knowledge. Thus the conflict has been very much in the nature of a sham siege, in which the garrison attacked makes a show of resistance only for the look of the thing; or, it may be, in ignorance of the real designs of the besiegers; but speedily throw open their gates to those whom they secretly know, or in time discover to be, of friendly inclination, and possibly powerful allies. But in regard to the question of which we are speaking now, the issue is real, sharply defined, and unalterably fixed. If the atomic theory is true in the sense that matter ultimately consists of indivisible, incompressible, indestructible, unchangeable particles, which not only have no farther interpretation, but need none; then materialistic atheism is inevitable; and this great world, which seems like a grand beautiful creature, instinct with unutterable life, is dead and ice-cold at the heart. There is no avoiding this conclusion. For the theory would make the elementary atoms of matter to be true substance, in the sense that they are the ultimate reality underlying the appearances which make up our experience. And inasmuch as the creation of any true substance out of nothing is not only inconceivable but self-contradictory, these atoms must necessarily be conceived as eternal. I do not say that they are so conceived by all those who believe in them; for science and philosophy do not always go

together. A man may be an atomist, and also at the same time a very devout worshipper of God. But that is only because he fails to apply to his final analysis of matter the insight or the careful thought which has made that analysis possible. For if the ultimate atoms are real substance, it follows that they are the *only* substance in the universe; and God, if there be a God, is like ourselves a concourse of molecules, with attributes resulting solely from their action and re-action. Indeed, the old Epicureans consistently regarded their otiose deities thus, as beings elaborated out of the most subtle elements, and necessarily mortal when the great cycle of the ages leads back to chaos again. But for the modern mind no God can be wrought out thus. And equally intolerable, because absurd, is the notion of two diverse substances alike eternal. God therefore must be impossible except on the hypothesis of creation out of nothing, a notion which no one can really hold, or even think he holds, except at the cost of abnegating the very laws of thought which make any notions possible.

It would be out of place in an essay like the present to enlarge farther upon the untenable character of this doctrine of creation. To any one who has Mr. H. Spencer's "First Principles" at hand, it would be needless or else useless. But if there are those who fancy they can conceive that God was alone in His essential being for an eternity, and that then

"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" He called forth a new substance which was not contained in the resources of His nature; if there are those who think that Infinite Being could keep a corner in the universe for something which is not itself; if there are those whose faith contradictorily demands that matter should have its being in itself and not in God; they must at any rate acknowledge that the dogma of a creation out of nothing is left more and more in those unvisited wastes of unlovely sediment which mark the receding tide of thought; just as impracticable mud-banks make lonely deserts in an emptied estuary. And if the atomic theory in its materialistic realism be maintained while the impossibility of creation is felt, blank Atheism is inevitable.

Of course if Atheism be the final issue of legitimate thought we are bound to acquiesce. But the doctrine of Philosophical Ignorance has at least this value; that it shows the course of thought just glanced at to be essentially illegitimate, inasmuch as it utterly transcends our knowledge. The fond idea that the substance of the world may be tracked to its indestructible elements in atomic points of matter has been shown, by the contradictions in which it lands us, to be an enthusiastic delusion of minds intoxicated by the rapidity with which vista beyond vista is opened through the phenomenal world by the talisman of science. But the arguments of which a brief summary has been given show, with a force amounting to de-

monstration, that at the end of the farthest perspective which microscope or telescope aided by imagination can give, we are still in the dreamland of phenomena, and that the elements of our ultimate analysis are, like our first impressions, "such stuff as dreams are made of." This conclusion does not in the least invalidate the reality of the external world. As I shall endeavour to show in a succeeding essay, we believe in that because we cannot help it; because a predisposition to distinguish under the influence of various impressions between self and not-self is a constituent element of our nature. And obedience to that predisposition is strictly an effort of faith, of loyalty to the harmony of things as we find them; but it has no grounds whatever in logical proof, and, if possible, even less in any discovery of the actual substance composing the external world.

The case then stands thus. There seems to be considerable reason for believing that the whole phenomenal universe may be ultimately (not explained but) expressed in terms of molecular mechanics. So much light may be translated into so many vibrations of ether; so much heat into a certain amount of agitation amongst the molecules of the heated mass; so much chemical action signifies the transition of atomic combinations from one state of apparent equilibrium to another; and even so much thought means a possibly ascertainable amount of disintegration in the tissues of the brain. This minute mechanical action is of two

kinds; molecular disturbance as in heat, and atomic re-arrangement as in chemical action. If then by some surprising refinement of scientific appliances we were enabled to watch the ultimate atoms in their gyrations; and some enthusiastic physicists have believed this possible; it is supposed by many that we should have pierced to the secret of the world. But to say nothing of the alternatives of continuous or discontinuous substance, either of which has been shown to be impossible; to say nothing of the dissociation of matter and force which the atomic theory pure and simple first denies and then is compelled to assert; it is clear that this dance of atoms, which we are asked imaginatively to observe, is as purely phenomenal as those grosser forms of which it is the last analysis. It is only to sight that it could even conceivably be manifested. But sight being the compound result of a conjunction between subject and object, we should have no right whatever to take that conscious impression which arises out of a relation between the two, and to assert that this represents the object pure and simple. What that object is essentially in itself, when dissociated from the reaction of the subject upon it, would be just as unanswerable a question if we could look at a molecule, as it is when we look at a mountain. All our knowledge of the former, as of the latter, must consist in the mental impressions which it might make upon us. And if we tried to identify the cause of these impressions with a material basis or residuum

unconditionally characterized by impenetrability, we should be immediately involved in contradictions which would prove the whole course of our reasoning to have been a mere argument *ad absurdum* In the physical universe the indefinitely great and the indefinitely little alike have a background of unexplored and unsearchable infinity. And the whirl of atoms, could it be made discernible, would be like the march of the stars, a vision of glittering points which, by their ineffectual light, only awaken the dim consciousness of an unutterable abyss.

Thus we dispose of the second hypothesis mentioned above concerning the relations of mind and matter. It is impossible to maintain that mind is a mere phenomenon of matter, because all we know about the second is given us in forms of the first. For our world is made up of conscious impressions, some of which seem to arise spontaneously within us, we know not how; while others we are compelled to regard as occasioned directly by something outside ourselves. Then classing together all the latter impressions we call them the material world. But when we ask what that something is, which makes these impressions upon us, we are compelled to acknowledge that we do not know, and have no means of ascertaining, anything at all about it, except the fact that our consciousness is affected by it in one way or another. A hasty glance is corrected by an attentive examination; that is, the impressions obtained by the latter are more distinct

and congruous than those obtained by the former. Aided by a telescope or microscope we get more numerous and detailed impressions. However far this process were carried out, even to the molecules or atoms themselves, still our gain would consist solely in more particular mental impressions. And any definite hypothesis which we may form as to the substantial outward cause of this mental experience lands us at once in absurdity. To say, then, that mind is a phenomenon of matter amounts to much the same as saying that mind is a phenomenon of x, which no one need be concerned to deny. Who shall say that x is dead and not living? Philosophical ignorance at least makes determined Atheism impossible.

It might be argued indeed that all the real meaning of Materialism remains; because this does not signify that we know what matter is, but only that the phenomena which we call mind are uniformly associated with phenomena which we call matter, and so associated that the latter always precede the former. This, however, is an argument with which we may deal better presently, when we consider the fourth and final hypothesis that may be held as to the relations of mind and matter. Meanwhile it has a certain bearing as against the third possible position, according to which it might be maintained that matter is a phenomenon of mind. By this is not meant here the pedantic and paradoxical notion that there is no real existence outside of self;

but simply the idea that true substance is of the nature of mind, and manifests itself phenomenally in matter. It is obvious however that such a statement has no definite meaning. It does not convey nearly so clear an impression as does the atomic theory. We can certainly form a conception of little incompressible points of matter endowed with forces of attraction and repulsion. But when we try to think of mind as the substance underlying all phenomena we are at a loss. We recur instinctively to our own experience, and try to think of our own minds as the substance phenomenally manifested by our bodies. The attempt however is in vain. For both body and mind present themselves to us as a series of impressions; and though we distinguish these impressions as corporeal and mental, it is impossible to regard the one set as more or less phenomenal than the other. What we mean by our hands and feet is a certain set of visual and muscular feelings which experience associates together. And if we try to realize what we mean by our mind, we call up a series of vague memories strung together by a sense of identity in the living susceptibility to which they have appealed. But these memories and that sense of identity are manifestly quite as phenomenal as the other impressions which we call hands and feet. There is only this to be said, perhaps; that this sense of identity assures us in a dim sort of way of some reality immediately beneath it, which reality cannot

be presented in consciousness, precisely because it is not phenomenal, but hypo-phenomenal, and suggestive of substance.

No mystery of the external world can be compared for intensity of interest to that which every act of reflection presents to us within. The command "know thyself" is, notwithstanding the grim laughter of a great philosophical humourist, most truly the voice of heaven. For that which forms the fascination of this inward pondering is no mere arrogant assumption that our personal life is the central and supreme existence; but rather the feeling that the deepening darkness, with which the eye of reflection struggles, is the portal guarding the infinite reality of being. And never are we so humbled, never so utterly overwhelmed with adoring wonder, as when we recognise the vastness of the abyss beneath, into which our trembling spark of consciousness scintillates with rays at once so eager and so brief. When astronomy and geology unfold to us the enormous tracts of space and time, if they touch us with awe, they also excite an exhilarating pride in the intellectual force which has made so small a creature as man master of so gigantic a vision. In some dark moods, indeed, looking to the stars we may think them

> "Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
> Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
> His nothingness into man."

But such moods are for the most part short-lived.

And while they last it is reflection, not observation, which gives them all their power. The question, What am I? is pressed home by the "pitiless, passionless" persistency with which the stars shine on, for ever compelling consciousness and thought. Meantime the eye is not in reality turned upward, but downward, and beholds the heavens reflected on a deeper abyss within. So the midnight sky seen pictured in a deep lonely mountain tarn, has something weird about it, which is never felt in the broad expanse above. In our more familiar contemplations of nature, the bewildering multitude of living forms, and the enthralling perplexity of the problems they suggest, may at times strike us with a sense of despairing impotence: but more often they dazzle us with the endless possibilities of knowledge; and kindle to an ecstacy the keen individuality, which, like the electric spark, glows in the convergence of conflicting streams of force. Past history, which is a sort of generic memory, affects us perhaps in some aspects with the mingled pathos and wonderment expressed by Augustine in his "Confessions," when meditating on the identity of his half-forgotten self. We speak of man, not men; man, who knows nothing of his birth, and catches only doubtful glimpses, half recollection, half imagination, of his vanished childhood. And always as he grows in knowledge, power, and mastery of the world, he assumes vaster proportions in our view of the insoluble problem of existence. But yet when our contemplation is out-

ward only, untouched by the shadows of the mystery within, we are too prone to swell with pride in the accumulated mental wealth which is ours. As some luxurious heir of struggling forefathers might survey from a turret of his own erection the dominions they had won, and wrapping his soft garments about him congratulate himself on the happy chance which had dropped him on peaceful times; so we "the heirs of all the ages" learn but little reverence or loyalty to eternal Power through gloating over "the march of civilization." "Knowledge puffeth up," says St. Paul; and the knowledge he meant was surely this hard objective knowledge which does not feel how near our consciousness is to the infinite unknown. "*If any man thinketh he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know it.*"

It is when a man tries to know himself that he is brought most directly face to face with the mystery of life. And as Socrates supposed the oracle to have declared him to be the wisest man in Greece, only because he alone knew his own ignorance; so perhaps we may believe this voice, "know thyself" to be an oracle of heaven, because by the effort of obedience we are soonest convinced, not only that we ourselves are "unknowable individuals," but that much else is unknowable besides. And never is humility, sacred loyalty, or even true knowledge possible, until we feel how our relationship to the unknown pervades every act of consciousness and observation. Let any man

ask himself what he means by that little monosyllable "I," the most intense, and most undefinable of words. And while the one side which is defined by the apparently sharp boundary of the senses may *seem* at first sight clearly marked enough, the merest tyro in thinking must feel that the other and inner side, so to speak, has no boundary; but is shaded gradually off into depths which consciousness cannot sound. Again, the limit that seems so clear gives a negative definition only.

> "I am not what I see,
> And other than the things I touch."

In other words, I am all that is left after subtracting the not-me, or what strikes me as such, from the sum-total of perceived existence. But no definition can be satisfactory which is not positive as well as negative. For indeed it is not so much what I am not, as what I am, that I want to understand. Now, just in proportion to the intensity of the effort with which I try to realize myself positively, I find my field of inward vision receding from the shining barriers of the senses, and becoming more and more lost in the gathering darkness beyond which nothing but infinity can lie. There is no hard and fast line here. I am dimly aware of some depth below consciousness, out of which consciousness emerges, like shapes that rise through a clear deep sea, now dream-like in their shadowy outline, now more tangibly distinct, then suddenly flashing into the upper light. But whence they spring I cannot tell.

My deepest self is beyond my sounding-line. Or we may put the same experience in another way. I may say my positive notion of my personal self is this, that I am all that I realize directly without the intervention of eyes or ears, or other avenues of external perception. Of course, apart from the past awakening and education of consciousness by perception this would be absolutely nil. There would be nothing to realize. But this consideration does not in the least interfere with the distinction between that which I now realize without any direct intervention of the senses, and the new impressions which I continue to receive through them. The question then occurs, *what* do I thus realize? And I find the answer to be a more or less confused medley of reproduced impressions, which have come in formerly through the doors of sense, and seemed to have passed into oblivion; but which ever and anon return, sometimes through obvious association of ideas, sometimes with apparently spontaneous suddenness. Within the curtain of the eyelids, in utter silence, the ghosts of forgotten sights and sounds and feelings flit, perhaps in an order marshalled by imaginative purpose, perhaps in a chaos growing more and more fantastic as the will subsides in sleep. Here then is the domain of my personal life. This is my first positive conception of myself.

But on reflection, this is not enough. For I am surely more than a bundle of old memories. In fact, I must be; for the memories change, while I recognise

in self a continuous identity. No doubt the flickering forms and colours, the fugitive snatches of thought, are inseparable from that consciousness which feels its own identity beneath them. But inseparable though they be in fact, they are yet as really distinct therefrom as are the flitting figures of the camera obscura from the canvas which supports them. True, I cannot practically abstract those reproduced impressions, and realize my mind as a blank. But still, when I try to form a positive conception of that self in which personal identity consists, I am obliged to admit that to this true self those fleeting impressions are but changeful accidents, no more essential to it than wind-breathed ripples to the sea. I am compelled then, in theory at least—theory which means a beholding of the truth,—to abstract the changeful contents of the mind before I can get that positive conception of which I am in search. I do not want the pictures; I want the material on which they are traced. I do not want my thoughts; I want myself. Eyes and ears, and all the senses being closed, what is that which sustains and frames the accidents of imagination and memory?

We are now, I hope, in a position to estimate the significance of the hint given above* as to the office of reflection on self in the genesis of the idea of substance. For, asking ourselves what is meant by self, we get our answer in the form of a vague series of memories or impressions, strung

* See pp. 79, 80.

together by a sense of identity in the living susceptibility to which they have appealed. That those memories or impressions are phenomenal only is perfectly clear. Then, abstracting these, we have left only a background of continuous susceptibility, concerning which nothing articulate can be said, except that it generally maintains its own identity under every variety of impression. But farther, the consciousness of identity, although it necessarily involves and suggests a substantial and constant background, is itself phenomenal also. Nay, like all other impressions, it may be lost through disorders of the mind. I do not believe that it disappears in sleep.* But it would appear that cases do undoubtedly occur in which the continuous sense of personal identity is lost. Nay, people have even been known to live in alternate periods two separate lives. And in such cases the memory belonging to each life has passed over the period occupied by the other, as though the latter had been an utter blank. The patient, after a crisis, would not recognize any identity with the self of yesterday; but the self of a month ago, which yesterday seemed to have been utterly effaced and annihilated, would now rise again and assert an unbroken continuity with the self of to-day. The sense of identity is therefore, it must be confessed, like all other feelings, phenomenal only. But I urge that it necessarily suggests to us some-

* There is no really dreamless sleep, and we always keep our identity in dreams.

thing beneath consciousness that is not phenomenal only, but real and substantial. True, when in fixed and determined reflection we try to grasp that hypophenomenal reality, we lose ourselves in darkness; but it is a darkness that opens out into infinity. For no distinct boundary can be discerned to limit our personal life on the inward side; and, however deeply we may reflect on that constancy in variation which makes our identity, we are always dimly aware of a lower depth, which, while it is continuous with our consciousness, is utterly beyond sounding or measurement. Thus we get an idea—vague, it may be, but unspeakably impressive and real to those who feel the ultimate oneness of all existence—of a measureless ocean of living energy, which rolls its tide, as it were, into the little creek that is bounded by our senses, there to take the form of finite personal life. This flowing tide ripples on the shore of the objective world, and toys with pebbles, and drinks the scent of flowers; but, behind, is the broadening flood which widens out beyond vision or sounding-line into the inconceivable grandeur of God.

No doubt there are those who, with a set of anatomical diagrams, would speedily cut short any such speculations on the mystery of mind. In their view the only substance which can underlie the sense of personal identity is a tissue of brain molecules. But, having already dwelt on the impossibility of regarding mind as a phenomenon of matter, I will only add that

this sense of identity presents special difficulties to such a view. For it is obvious, from the constant disintegration of tissue involved in mental operations, that the identity which we feel does not depend upon the identity of molecules in the brain; as they are continually changed. It must therefore, according to this view, depend upon the continuity of the vibrations, or other physical affections, which are handed on from one generation of molecules to another. But, apart from any disputes as to the significance of the word "matter," it must be clear that when identity depends, not upon the sameness of material molecules, but upon similarity in their modes of motion or other affection, this is an identity which has no existence whatever unless in a percipient subject. For the affections are similar, not the same; and it is only by meeting in the same subject that they can excite the sense of identity. Indeed it will be found that every attempt on purely materialistic grounds to account for the feeling of personal identity labours under this inconsistency, that, after denying everything but a succession of brain molecules with similar affections, it always proceeds on the assumption that there is something to recognize the similarity —an assumption which it is the express aim of the hypothesis to eliminate.*

* Let us keep these two elements of the problem carefully in view—the changing molecules on the one hand, and the similar affections on the other. Now, it is clear that a repetition of

I maintain then, that the idea of a substratum of brain tissue is wholly inadequate to account for the mysterious phenomenon of conscious identity amidst various impressions, and continual disintegration of organic matter. But if I may use words which, I acknowledge, are at best indefinite and shadowy, we

similar affections cannot be felt as continuous unless they affect the same subject. A schoolmaster passing along a row of boys, and giving to each a smart rap with a cane, excites *similar* feelings in each; but, certainly, no continuous feeling. To secure this, all the raps must be concentrated on one boy. In the same way, we can imagine similar physical affections—modes of motion or otherwise—handed on from one generation of brain molecules to another; but the subject being changed, there can be no continuity of impression. The brain tissue which, eight years ago, received and recorded the perception of a beautiful landscape in a distant land, has left behind it other tissue similarly impressed. But personal identity implies *something that knows* the impressions to be similar, and connects the present faded memory with the thought of a former vivid vision. Or, I may be imperfectly reminded by an occurrence to-day of something that I experienced ten years ago, and have never thought of since. Now, granting that the law of association acts by some excitement of contiguous nerve matter in the brain, there is not a particle remaining of the brain which I had ten years ago. I will not dispute, what is exceedingly probable, that the cellule, or whatever it might be, which recorded that old experience, transferred its inscribed impression to its successors without any conscionsness on my part. But, when the voice of to-day agitates the latest edition of that cellule, and brings its record to light, there must be something which knows the age of the record, and which, going back ten years from the present moment, not only recognizes an identity between the original and the reproduced impression, but also knows that there is an imperfection in the record which now cannot be made good. What is that something?

may conceive a true spiritual substance to be so conditioned by those forces which present themselves objectively to the anatomist in the phenomena of the brain, that it is largely dependent upon them for the form it takes as a personal life with an individual character. Nor ought these cases of double identity to which reference has been made to be any objection to this view. . To make the sense of identity possible there must be an abiding substantial life. But that life being dependent for self-consciousness upon the reaction of those external forces which we call the material world, any abnormal action of these forces, as in diseases of the brain, may very well occasion disturbance in that sense of finite form and personality which it is their office to give.

The result of this somewhat digressive, but not irrelevant discussion may be summed up thus:—It is impossible to maintain, while assigning a clear and usual meaning to the words, that matter is a phenomenon of mind. For the only significance we can attach to the word mind, or even to the vaguer term spirit, is that of a variety of fleeting images and feelings, hovering over a dark background, in itself an utter blank, but which when broken by these images and feelings gives the sense of identity in the subject of which they are passing affections.* Now it

* It is not intended here to ignore the peculiar phenomena of desire and will. But whatever their peculiarity may be it does not raise them out of the category of phenomena.

is impossible to dispute the phenomenal character of mind in this the ordinary acceptation of the word. Even of that dim background where the sense of identity broods, and where we have a tantalizing apprehension of some ultimate reality, all we can say is that it inevitably suggests to us a mysterious depth out of which our personal life emerges. But all apprehensions, all suggestions, however mystically indefinite, are yet, so far as they make any impression on consciousness at all, still as much phenomenal as the phosphorescence of the sea, or the zodiacal light. And no labour of thought, no steadfast contemplation, can yield us anything more than such evanescent gleams from an underlying unknown. Nay, were we to emulate the prolonged agony of introspection, attributed to Indian mystics, we should gain nothing but a loss at once of the world and self, the blurring of all outlines into a fatuous indistinguishable chaos, which must subside into inane darkness. Nevertheless, this exercise of reflection brings us to the shores of the infinite mystery by a shorter road than any speculations on the outer world. And any man who feels how his spark of consciousness burns upon the bosom of immensity, fed by energies which stream momentarily from unfathomable sources, must surely have the haunting sense of some transcendent Whole, of which he is an infinitesimal part. Thus the oracles that murmur from the abyss within prepare us to interpret the dreams of poetry and the hints

of science concerning the ultimate oneness of all things.

It is time now to turn to the only remaining alternative mentioned above concerning the relationship of spirit and matter. For since it is no longer possible to regard them as distinct and independent substances, and since, as we have seen, they are insuperable difficulties in the way of our thinking either to be the phenomenon of the other, we are forced by the necessities of thought to betake ourselves to the only hypothesis left, and to look upon both mind and matter in all their forms as phenomenal manifestations of one substance equally underlying both.

It is likely enough, indeed, that by some this necessity of thought would be denied. Why use the word substance,—they would ask—when what you mean is the negation of thought? We recognize—they would urge,—equally with any adherent of your dreamy philosophy, the entirely phenomenal nature of our sensations and reflections. We know that every sensation, when analyzed, resolves itself into something different from what it seems; and changes Proteus-like its forms as it flies before the searching microscope or scalpel. We are glad to hear you acknowledge the same to be the case with every form of consciousness as well. But now, why should we trouble ourselves about anything more, when you confess in effect that the realms of knowledge can be extended no farther?

We agree that our knowledge is phenomenal only; but we altogether deny the necessity for making any assumptions with regard to unknowable substance. Such is in reality the positivist attitude. It is a mistake to regard positivism as necessarily materialistic in the ordinary sense of the word. For what is generally meant by materialism involves a theory about matter as the ultimate basis and explanation of everything. But to positivism, properly understood, such a theory is entirely foreign, and indeed hostile; for its strength lies in its acceptance of all phenomena distinctly realized, without making any attempt to give an ultimate account of them. Impressions, and the classification of impressions it knows; but it abjures all desire to know anything more. Substance, cause (in the ordinary sense), the absolute, the infinite, God, are therefore to the positivist perhaps venerable idola, interesting and pathetic monuments of human illusion, but nothing more. Now it always seems to me that this attitude of mind is connected with a defective appreciation of the true philosophy of ignorance. And a more particular explanation of the reasons for this observation will lead the way to the final results of this essay.

It is one thing to know of a fact, and another and a very different thing to know *about* it. In the first case, I may be very certain that the fact exists; but because I do not know its nature or relations, that very certainty excites in me the sense rather of ignorance

than of knowledge. In the other case, when I have been enlightened to any extent as to the nature and relations of the fact, my attention is so concentrated upon the change from obscurity to distinctness, that I am conscious rather of knowledge than of ignorance. Thus, when on a dark night, I am suddenly aware of an object some few yards off, concerning which I can form no opinion whether it is a bush, or a group of men, or a heap of stones, the sense of ignorance awakened by it is much more striking than the knowledge which I realize. If however a flash of lightning shows me that it is a heap of stones in the middle of the road, I seem to myself now to know all about it. In reality, I know very little more than I did. I am still quite ignorant of the nature of the stones, of the purpose for which they were placed in such a position, and of much else on which I should begin to speculate if I suffered my thoughts to dwell upon the subject for any length of time. But, at the moment, the change from obscurity to distinctness is so marked, that my knowledge is more apparent than my ignorance. It is obvious then that ignorance does not always mean that we know absolutely nothing. It may mean that we know something in such a manner as to excite a sense of ignorance rather than of knowledge. And this is true, not only in cases of obscure presentation to the senses, such as in the instance supposed above, but also in cases where the existence of an object is necessarily implied in legiti-

mate processes of thought; or, in other words, where its non-existence is unthinkable.

There is an ignorance which consists in the total absence of any conscious relationship between the mind and the object concerned; as if we should say of a baby that he is ignorant of the Emperor of China. Here there is absolutely no relation in existence such as that of subject and object. But there are also cases in which ignorance means rather the indefinable darkness that hangs over the bounds of thought, a darkness which does not diminish the certainty, but only obscures the nature, of some vaguely presented reality. Such ignorance has in it a positive element. It is not the mere negation of thought. It does not consist in any uncertainty whether in that impenetrable darkness something or nothing exists. It consists rather in the impossibility of definite thought about something, the non-existence of which is yet even more unthinkable.* For instance, it was impossible for the ancients to help thinking that there must be another side, or, at all events, an end somehow, to the Atlantic Ocean. They might indeed refuse to consider the subject at all. But if they did think about it, their very ignorance contained a positive element, the assertion of the existence of something, the nature of which they did not know. That there must be some other side to the apparently boundless

* Cf. Mr. Herbert Spencer's "First Principles."—Chapter iv. particularly, pp. 94-97. Third Edition.

water was a positive necessity of thought. That other side might be only the sharp edge of the world overlooking the infinite void; it might be the blessed Atlantis; it might be an iron barrier frowning down the presumption of adventurous mortals. But this very ignorance of what it was set at work a law of the mind which concentrates attention on unsatisfied thirst for knowledge; and contained an assurance of the certain reality of something, the nature of which was unknown. On what does the world rest? asked the Hindoo pupil. On a white elephant; answered the teacher. And on what does the elephant stand? pursued the scholar. On the back of a great tortoise; replied the philosopher. But what does the tortoise stand on? persisted the inquirer. Here, however, the line was to be drawn between ingenuous receptivity and impious presumption. Yet the very cessation of thought along such a line necessarily implied the reality of some final support for the world. The pupil did not know what that was; but his very sense of ignorance carried with it an assurance that the thing he did not know really existed. And he was right. He was indeed utterly wrong as to the particular form in which the universe satisfied the necessities of thought. But that something existed, which justified his irresistible certainty; or, in other words, that the stability of the world was maintained by something much more fundamental than a great tortoise, was perfectly true; though *how* it was true he could not know.

Similarly our ignorance of what underlies phenomena is only another name for the necessity of thought which obliges us to believe that *something* underlies them. Thus the earliest races, of whose emotions in contemplation of the heavens we have any trace, rejoicing in the bright blue canopy above them, imputed to it by a sublime instinct an expansive life, and called it Dyaus, the Shining One. But the Hebrews, the very intensity of whose religious life narrowed the area of their world, explained the reason of the appearance to be a sapphire vault, which sustained the burden of an unknown ocean above. Now when such explanations were felt to be irrelevant or contrary to fact, it was impossible for the human mind to rest satisfied with the appearance itself as its own explanation. There must be some reason underlying it. And here again the ignorance associated with wonder was also an assertion of the adequacy of the cause for wonder, if only known. So, when we are told that underlying the appearance are innumerable infinitesimal particles suspended in the air, which are agitated by the smallest and most rapid vibrations in the ether, so that they propagate as from fresh centres the blue rays of light, we feel first a sense of intense satisfaction, and then a fresh access of longing desire for farther knowledge. For infinitesimal particles tossed by impinging waves of ether may be fairly regarded as an interesting stage in the reduction of this part of the universal problem; but to think of

it as the final stage is simply impossible. Whence is all this endless eager movement? How is it generated and how for ever sustained? The sun may seem an exhaustless reservoir of force; but it is not infinite; and how are its energies renewed? I may be told that its energies are slowly exhausted; and that the Titan is not now what he was in the days of his youth. Yet the universe is never exhausted. The fires that pale in one centre of power burst forth afresh in another. "The Everlasting fainteth not neither is weary." And even if the stars too wither like leaves of the forest, yet Eternity never loses one pulse of energy, but for ever sustains undiminished the wealth of power which is now beating in waves of light on the firmament above. It is impossible, therefore, to arrest thought at the limit which the science of the day prescribes. Every profounder interpretation of appearances awakens thought of yet another depth below; and unless I am prepared to treat apparent existence as merely illusive and dissolving views of an "unsubstantial pageant" I am compelled to think of some ultimate reality instinct with immortal power, of which all that I see and know are so many fragmentary gleams. To tell me then that I do not and cannot know what substance is, that I never can know anything but phenomena, neither convinces me of illusion, nor drives the thought of ultimate eternal reality from my mind. My ignorance is precisely of that kind which asserts its own object. The

more I reflect upon my impotence to grasp substance or conceive its connection with phenomena, the more assured I feel that every passing phase of existence testifies to some abiding reality.

"Since the only possible measure of relative validity among our beliefs," says one of the greatest among modern philosophers,* "is the degree of their persistence in opposition to the efforts made to change them, it follows that this,"—*i.e.* the consciousness of absolute being—"which persists at all times under all circumstances, and cannot cease until consciousness ceases, has the highest validity of any." Similarly that, to which every process of thought leads up, and before which no resting place is found, must be a reality. We are sure of the being of ultimate substance; though we do not know about it. It must be; or else all processes of thoughts are utterly untrustworthy. But when we try to convert this notion of ultimate being into positive knowledge, that is, the knowledge of ascertained relations, by ranging it with familiar impressions which it resembles; we find that it is foreign to them all, or at least only shows an affinity for the dim sense of something below the surface of consciousness, and in which our personal life is rooted. Yet that dim sense is itself phenomenal only. And so the notion of substance, while its reality is necessarily implied in our ignorance, remains outside the domain of knowledge, a vast shadowy rebuke to

* Mr. Herbert Spencer, loc. cit.

the impotence of the finite mind, but a grand testimony to our kinship with the infinite.

The same thing is true of that confused idea, if idea it can be called, that inconceivable totality of existence which the word Universe implies. How inextricably intertwined are thoughts of true substance, and of the all in all, has been already seen in the course of the preceding observations. Those lines of Tennyson, in which he hints that to know the inmost secret of a little flower, would be to know both God and man, are as profoundly true as they are exquisitely beautiful. Yet, of that totality of things, as of ultimate substance, all we can say is, that while it is necessarily and for ever outside the domain of positive knowledge, still its reality is implied in our very ignorance. We know of it, though we do not know about it. For the knowledge with which science is professedly satisfied, consists in the reference of new facts to some place of orderly relation to other facts, with the invariable character of which we are already familiar. Thus the physical philosopher works like a child with a dissected map, who has a part already set together in orderly arrangement; but who has around him many other ragments, the proper position of which he does not at once see. The child studies each of these, and experiments with them, until he finds how they fit in with the angles and curves of his uncompleted work, while every portion brought into its place gives additional gratification to his growing perceptions of the general

plan. So the knowledge of the man of science consists in the distinctness and orderly arrangement in his own mind of a number of familiar facts. But scattered around him are many fragments of knowledge yet to be fitted in to that inward system which represents to him the outward order of the universe. Each of these fragments has to be studied, and made the subject of experiment, until perceived points of resemblance enable him to refer it to its proper position. Now what is the nature of the gratification that he feels after every achievement of the kind? There is certainly a pleasure in the discovery of unexpected correspondences, as, for instance, when it is remarked that the prevalence of disturbance in the sun's photosphere co-exists with magnetic storms in the bosom of the earth, and brilliant auroras in the north. But surely there is also a larger joy in the feeling of a fresh approximation towards the inconceivable because infinite unity, which constitutes the maze of worlds a universe. Every brilliant point of knowledge, like a torch in a fog, carries around it a halo of darkness made perceptible, of conscious ignorance, which is not so much a negation, as an assertion, of existences hitherto unmeasured yet continuous with those we know. And the whole city of science with its brilliant halls and glittering markets of knowledge, bordered by far-stretching, dimly-lighted lanes, shows, like some illuminated town at night, over-arched by the confused glare which gathers

up all separate lights to merge them in the glimmer of an infinite beyond.

It is impossible then to exclude from thought that universal order, that inconceivable totality of Being in which our personal consciousness and all its little knowledges are engulfed. For though in its boundless extension that formless idea surpasses all thought, its unreality is utterly unthinkable; and there is a sort of intensity about it which increases in a rapidly growing ratio, with every fresh addition to the known domain of law. It is, indeed, the transcendental goal of physical science itself. Astronomy figures it in circles of fire which widen out beyond all power of sight, everywhere embracing one law, one order, one power, one kingdom. Geology, by its very silence concerning a beginning or an end, consecrates eternity, as astronomy hallows space, with the shadow of that unutterable Unity. Electricity, chemical action, gravitation, magnetism and heat run into each other like the notes of an endless fugue, implying one ground tone which in the complexity of sound escapes the ear. All radiant lines of knowledge lose themselves in the same unapproachable light where the highest flights of spiritual imagination culminate. And though words fail where thought loses bounds; though every emotion excited by hints of this dread Unity subsides into something like mute shame; yet the spell which is thus exercised over our souls is the inmost secret of the joy we feel in all our largest contemplations of the

world. Substance may be unsearchable; and the divine universe is unspeakable; but the indefeasible certainty of their reality is our nearest intellectual approach to the One Eternal who draws us for ever with a resistless attraction to worship.

We may frankly admit then, that both spirit and matter, so far as they are presented directly or indirectly in our consciousness, are equally phenomenal manifestations of an unknown and, in any strict sense, an unknowable substance, in which all things are one. But our contention is that in this epithet "unknown" a possible fallacy lurks, against which we should be on our guard. For our ignorance is of a kind that would be impossible apart from the reality of that about which we are ignorant. The same intellectual constitution which makes science possible, the impulse to seek after the reason of things and their completeness, implies in its very germ an already existing, though inarticulate, belief in ultimate substance, and in an infinite unity. Farther, the very fact that our mental faculties cannot work without suggesting this dim majesty which is beyond their ken, compels a constant reference thereto, which, as it is involved in the laws of thought, cannot be without practical import. This point cannot be cleared up apart from the doctrine of faith, to be submitted in a succeeding essay, which treats of the inherent predisposition which impels human aspiration after the eternal and complete. Meantime, while heartily

acknowledging that far more is needed to give to religion the glow of devotion, we insist only that in the darkness which broods about the mysterious bases of our own personal life, we attain at least such an indefinite nearness to the substance of all being, as forbids our thinking the latter to be a mere aggregation of physical forces. The certainty that we ourselves and all we see and know are "parts and proportions of one wondrous whole" not only gives all interest to knowledge and all sublimity to contemplation, but carries with it the assurance that the Power in which all things are one, is not to be identified with any one of its manifestations; and in particular neither with mechanical force nor individual mind.

Here we may conveniently recur to an objection which we supposed to be made as to the value of our conclusion that mind cannot be regarded as a phenomenon of matter. This objection was to the effect that "all the real meaning of materialism remains; because this does not signify that we know what matter is, but only that the phenomena which we call mind are uniformly associated with the phenomena which we call matter, and so associated that the latter always precede the former."* Here, of course, so far as the

* P. 78. This is not what is usually meant by materialism. Indeed, I do not see what object a man can have in calling himself a materialist, unless it be to avow his belief that all phenomena, mental or physical, are ultimately and adequately *explained* by

observed connection of matter and spirit is concerned, is a mere statement of facts which every one is compelled to acknowledge. But the statement is made in such a way as to suggest a conclusion the grounds of which do not lie within it. For it is tolerably clear that the force of the objection lies in the suppressed assumption, that we know more about the ultimate meaning of physical phenomena than we do in regard to those we call mental. Otherwise there would be no point in the argument at all. Thus it amounts in effect to this—that mind is no doubt a great mystery, but we are sure it is never manifested except as the result of the preceding physical phenomena, about which we know at least this much—that there is nothing underlying them except molecular mechanics. Strike out the last assumption, and then what is the objection worth? Permit us to doubt or deny the finality of molecular mechanics; which a true philosophy of human ignorance not only allows but compels us to do; and there remains to us just as before, the possibility that in molecular mechanics we have only the phenomenal mode in which eternally living substance emerges into the world of sense, as organic or personal life. It is vain to insist that the beginning of human life, equally with the germination of a

molecular mechanics. But if he admits that he does not know what molecules are, nor what force is, he might as well call himself a spiritualist at once: *i.e.* one name is as applicable or inapplicable as the other.

cabbage, present no sign of anything but molecular changes. No doubt; yet, as we have seen, molecular mechanics regarded as an ultimate explanation soon land us in sheer absurdity; and we are compelled to regard the last results obtained in this direction, either by experiment or by scientific imagination, as the phenomena of a deeper reality. Suppose that reality to be symbolized by life rather than by death; and materialism becomes impossible in any form but one which might with equal propriety be called spiritualism.

In the preceding essay on the "Mystery of Matter," this association of true substance with life rather than with dead atoms or mechanical force was treated only as the one postulate of rational religion, the one branch from the tree of knowledge by which, if there were only a true prophet to use it with confident faith, the bitter waters of controversy might perchance be healed. But we are now brought face to face with the inevitable objection that such an assumption has nothing to do with knowledge in any practical sense of the word; that, in fact, at best it is only a sentimental dream. Granted that we are obliged to think of some ultimate reality as closing the series of phenomenal metamorphoses which baffle analysis; yet, it may be urged, this only means that through its very imperfections thought comes to a dead halt, and this negation of thought we dignify with the name of substance: now to associate a mere

negation with any such positive notion as that of life is about as reasonable as to connect the square root of minus one with human truth and love. But, we reply, this suggestion that substance means only the negation of thought will not bear a moment's examination. We find, for instance, that the appearance which presents one form to the naked eye yields another to a microscope with a power of a hundred diameters; a third under a five-fold power; and a fourth under the most perfect instrument which we can use. Always fresh forms come into view; that is, new constituent parts are revealed which were unseen before. Are we then to believe that, if we could go on raising the power indefinitely, we should always obtain new results? This would be equivalent to an assertion of the infinite divisibility of matter. Now, apart from the incongruities involved in such an assertion, it would necessarily confound molecular mechanics; because there would be no ultimate centres for the elementary forces. Here, then, at once is the notion of something that does positively exist; and yet about the mode of its existence, or how it is ultimately differentiated from space (if it is so at all), it is impossible for us to form any idea. It is not a mere negation of thought. It is the one positive element that remains the same through all the supposed infinite changes of microscopic vision. Or, if we are to suppose that in such a process a stage must be reached at which the play of apparent atoms or monads of

force would come into view, we should still have, as we have seen elsewhere, only an extremely recondite phenomenon, which certainly would not explain itself; and which would, therefore, be felt positively to imply some underlying mystery of being. Now, the two alternatives just put are not merely ideal. If the material universe has any existence at all,—and that is here throughout assumed,—these are alternatives of fact, not of thought. The notion, then, of an unknown substance is not a mere negation of thought. It is rather the one positive element which forms the foundation of all our clearest and most distinct perceptions, while it survives the abstraction of every definition. The utmost that can, with plausible force, be urged is that, beyond the fact of its existence, we know nothing whatever.

And yet we may venture to offer some reasons why it should seem more rational to think of that ultimate reality of being as Infinite and Eternal Life, than to leave a void in the soul which must instantly be occupied with the vapid and inane idea of a universal mechanical action. Indeed, no one who feels himself driven to choose between the two alternatives will hesitate for a moment. For it seems impossible to believe that any one ever faced fairly the idea of a Universe dead and cold at the heart, without feeling that sickness of soul which seizes upon us in the apprehension of an abysmal falsehood. Lucretius might have atoms and death on his lips, but the

pathetic eagerness of his devotion, and the grand enthusiasm, the almost prophetic awe, which tremble through every line in his largest contemplations of the universe, show plainly enough that the power of nature's eternal life possessed his heart. He was no Atheist in spirit, though the ghastly phantom of oppressive superstition excited him to a proud defiance; which, for want of a better, assumed outwardly that guise. If it be not inconsistent with religious aspiration to see the majesty of nature and of God as one—if scorn of spiritual cowardice is often fiercest in the truly spiritual mind—if the longing to scatter light shows the burning spark of divinity within—it is not impossible that Lucretius had the most profoundly religious nature that ever existed amongst the Latin race till Augustine arose. But there are many like him, who do not fairly face that notion of a dead Universe which their words would describe. If asked, they would, perhaps, say that they know nothing of any life or death beyond the familiar groups of phenomena summed up by those names; as for the Universe to them it is neither dead nor alive. And yet, unconsciously to themselves, they must slide into one or the other conception. The more susceptible fall into the attitude of worship without knowing it. Perhaps, when sunbeams slant through autumn leaves on some weather-stained tower, rich in historic memories—perhaps, when a sudden bend in a lordly river opens a long vista of shadowed banks with sunny

patches here and there—perhaps, when the bell of a flower draws the wistful gaze down the streaks of light running in delicate curves to the secret chamber where life meets death and prevails — perhaps, in listening to the pathetic cadences which all softened sounds of nature make; such men feel the inward glow with which the life within owns the life without, and though there is no word of prayer, they silently worship. But, too often the refusal to use even the most mystically suggestive words in an expansive and imaginative sense — the attitude of excessive mental precision fixed by scientific discipline—and the constant habit of denial except where the senses assert, unite to thrust the man into the other alternative position; and without being conscious of it he treats the world as dead. Since then, the one position or the other seems practically almost inevitable, it is worth while to offer some reasons for associating our shadowy thoughts of the final mystery of Being with life rather than with death.

Life exists, to our experience, in an almost endless variety of forms; but there is one note which is common to them all, and that is the impression which they make of spontaneous energy. Farther enquiry may lead us to conclude or to suspect that the new energy observed, for instance, in the germination of a seed is, equally with the fall of a stone or the flight of a spark, the inevitable result of pre-existing causes. But that is not by any means inconsistent with the survival of

our first impression, that in the act of germination a new centre of power is established, which seems to contain within itself the means of modifying, diverting, or concentrating, if not of absolutely originating force. Again, we regard animal existence as a more intense form of life, just because it seems to exhibit a more vigorous spontaneity. The creature that moves about with a certain individuality detached from surrounding objects, and always carries within it the power of effecting new results, makes a much more striking impression of spontaneity than the vegetable which never leaves the spot to which it clings. And so it is that our own appears the intensest life of all, because in our own volitions we seem as it were to catch force in the very act of self-creation. The fundamental element then in our idea of life is spontaneity; the appearance, or the reality of an original centre of force. But when we use the word in any emphatic sense, such as always weights it, when we attribute life to the eternal mystery of being, we always add to that spontaneity a sense of its own existence. That is, life is never so much life to us as when it most intensely realizes that it is spontaneous or free. This does not imply arbitrariness, or caprice, or self-will; rather the reverse. For never do we feel our energy so spontaneous, and never do we so keenly realize life, as when we are possessed by some noble passion, which bears us, as we say, beyond ourselves; which makes us, in fact, the centre of a power that is far grander than self-will,

and that radiates from us with as little effort as heat from burning flame. When we love with self-forgetful devotion, or hate with righteous indignation, we have no feeling of labour, and just as little suspicion of compulsion: life flows like an impetuous river, with no thought of the heights from which it falls, nor of the broad levels that it seeks. Our moral ideas also modify the sense in which we speak of life. For selfishness seems self-consumed by introverted energies, like a decaying corpse; and so we liken it to death. While generosity and loyalty seem to live the more intensely through their self-expenditure, just as exercise imparts a glow of health.

This explanation itself may suggest some reasons why we should associate the final mystery of Being with life rather than with death. For the lowest degree of meaning which we attach to the word, that of spontaneity, must necessarily be attributed to the source and substance of all things. So far as phenomenal existence is concerned, we may, at least conceivably be mistaken: even the secondary originality which we associate with created life, the power of modifying or diverting, of storing up and emitting at pleasure derived force, may be the effect of illusion. But whatever may be the case with phenomena, the substance manifested by them must contain within itself, or rather, must be the original fountain of all force. This, of course, is not to be taken as implying that any force has ever been newly created.

It is at most an apparently fresh modification of an eternal energy. But that energy, inherent in everlasting Being, cannot be traced to any farther source, and inevitably conveys to our minds the impression of self-origination or spontaneity. In this sense therefore we are compelled to attribute life to the unknown. The unbeginning and unending vibration of ultimate atoms is usually so presented to us that the eye of imagination runs from one link to another in the chain of causation until the mind is bewildered, and no hint of spontaneity is perceived. But when we remember that succession is after all only a subjective form impressed upon the outer world, and that all these ripples of causation which pass before the eye are more really consentaneous manifestations of one energy, the sense of spontaneity is at once given: and it is inseparable from some dim sense of life. Nay, farther, as in the nature of things, we must be far more certain of the spontaneity of eternal energy than we can possibly be of the free impulses of created life; and as the originality which we associate with that energy has infinitely more of reality about it; so the life which even in this lowest degree of significance we attribute to the substance of the world is felt to be immeasureably more living than our thoughts. If then our sense of that life is dim, it is not from want of any intensity in it, but from feebleness of life in us.

Beyond this, I do not know that any distinct attribute is necessarily involved in our inevitable

assumption of a true substance underlying phenomena. But when we join to that sense of self-subsistent being the notion of an all-embracing unity which it suggests, and the glorious cosmic order by which that unity is figured forth, it does seem disloyal to resist the impulse that carries us on to the imagination of an infinite thought, and of a self-contained harmony, which to us are wisdom, goodness, and love.

But here let us pause. These words we have used are not and never can be justified by the line of argument which we have followed. We cannot think the Universe dead. There is a sense in which we are sure it far more truly lives. But that sense is utterly inadequate to the majesty of the subject with which we deal. And when we strive to expand that sense, we must beware lest, like climbers of the misty Brocken, we only throw the shadow of self upon the clouds. It may be that this sense of the unknown and unknowable was intended, if the expression be allowed, to arouse faculties which owe but little to the intellect, save only chastening and restraint.

Some reasons have already been urged for regarding the background of our personal life as being to our consciousness the true threshold of the Infinite. And the recollection of these may, it is hoped, give more significance to the apprehension of a universal life. Owning most devoutly—the word is surely applicable—that all our thoughts, imaginations, hopes, and fears are as little substantial in themselves as sunbeam

or shadow, we yet feel that the indubitable phenomena of our own consciousness do most of all assure us of that which for ever is. For, notwithstanding high authority on the other side, we know more of ourselves than we can possibly know of the world about us. True, I cannot mark so well the laws which govern the sequences of phenomena within me, as I can the laws of outward nature. But sequences after all are not much, apart from a sense of power; and that arises only within. There is an enormous difference between our knowledge of self, and our knowledge of the not-self; a difference which separates the two by a whole heaven. Other things I know only as they affect me; they are like the moon which presents only one face, and is utterly unknown on the other side. But myself I know as an effect or effluence of something behind and beneath me, greater than all thought. The mystery of matter is never realized until we have felt the mystery of mind. For when I reflect on my own personal life, I cannot affect to regard it as self-supporting. I feel its basis deepening down into something more than self, yet continuous with my life. But I cannot put myself inside anything else and realize by reflection the sacred shadow that shrouds its inner side. It is a necessity of thought that I should believe every phenomenon to have that inner side; but I realize it only in myself. For it is through the endless vistas of reflection that the secret of eternal being hints itself to us, as the spiritual substance in which

our own life inheres, and with which it is continuous. This may not, and indeed does not justify us in attributing to the Infinite that personal mode of existence which we know in ourselves, and of which certain limitations constitute the formal essence. But it certainly forbids our identifying it with inanimate, that is, derived and successional force. It should never be forgotten that our first and fundamental notion of existence is life. The other idea of inanimate mechanical force is an inference from our observation that the energies suggested by material motion do not operate after the manner of the power which we exercise in voluntary effort. Yet in the last result eternal energy must be spontaneous; and is therefore best thought of as a Universal Life.

If it be asked what is the use of a notion so vague as this is admitted to be,* the answer must be gathered from experience rather than from theory. Human nature is so constituted that confidence, and peace, and unwavering devotion are impossible, unless the order and the ideals, which attract the contemplative eye, are felt out to their uttermost foundation or perfection in something unalterable or eternal. The refusal, for instance, to recognize in causation anything more than invariable antecedence, is felt to be unworkable in practice. For the notion of mere sequence is not a true representation of the impression inevitably made

* That is in itself; apart from the warmth and fulness which spiritual experience and imagination can legitimately give.

upon our minds by the succession of phenomena which we link together as cause and effect. This invariable sequence within the limits of experience is not all that we mean by the order of nature; nay, it lacks precisely that element which invests law with grandeur, and inspires our loyal confidence in its abiding reign. Philosophers little to be suspected of any metaphysical leanings have therefore felt themselves compelled to add to our experience of invariable sequence, the recognition of the persistency of force. It is only this which leads us to regard any cause in nature as "more permanent than its existing and known effects, extending further, and about to produce other and more instances besides what it has produced already."* But when once this element is admitted, it is impossible to stop short of a self-existing and self-consistent Power, as the guarantee of universal order. For all known forms of force are so correlated that each will, under certain conditions, occasion the manifestation of any other. Thus the rapid chemical union of carbon and oxygen occasions heat; heat begets mechanical movement; this may be so directed as to excite electricity; and electricity will produce magnetism; while in every case just so much of the one force disappears as is represented by its equivalent in the new force evoked. The correlation of these forces will be

* See Mozley's Bampton Lectures. He denies that we have any "rational grounds" for such an expectation. This point will be discussed in the next Essay.

found as certain and invariable, as are their several connections with their own phenomenal effects. Here again in such regular transmutations, we are obliged to recognize the existence of a sufficient reason. Whether we regard those forces as varying forms of one energy, or as entirely different energies the relations of which are embraced and controlled by a comprehensive law, in either case our idea of order and our confidence in its continuance implies some fundamental Power, whose omniprescence and permanence makes the Universe. It is impossible to separate the emotion of triumphant confidence, which the stedfast order of the world excites, from this recognition of the substantial reality of ultimate Power. Take that recognition away and the emotion dies. The fortuitous concurrence of atoms, were such a thing conceivable, even though it should present the same patterns a thousand times in succession, could never beget that confidence, nor awaken that sense of grandeur, which we associate with the order of the world.

Again, apart altogether from the question of personal immortality, it does seem that some dim notion of eternity is needed for the distinctive dignity of man. The clear, tangible, present time with the long perspective of the past, and the shining mist of the future, makes up to our minds one whole thought, which stretches indefinitely beyond our powers of conception, but still is felt to be a unity. There lie all purposes and acts in orderly succession, a succession

which at the same time gives a dreamy sense of co-existence. And it is the assurance of law and order there, in other words of eternal self-consistent power, which gives to our lives a feeling of continuity with all activity, past or to come, and so makes it worth our while to strike our little stroke with all our might before we die. Without some such element of eternity in our consciousness, there would hardly be any hold for the bond of interest which binds us to the apparent beginnings of human activity on the one hand, or to their remote and unimaginable issues in the future. Apart from the sense of some strong basis in which their connection is assured, memory and foresight could not raise us so far as they do above the level of the beasts. And here, more even than in contemporary phenomenal order, we realize the use and practical power of our inarticulate assurance that one life underlies, pervades and comprehends all.

Stronger still, and of more solemn import, is the practical influence which this vague idea of the eternal exercises on the nature of moral sanctions. For if the sense of infinite substance and power imparts to our perceptions of physical order the notion of some imperishable grandeur; much more does the feeling that the moral law evinces some everlasting self-consistency at the heart of the universe give to moral commands their indefinite, immeasureable awe. It may very well be that *standards* of right are as variable as races of mankind. But this notion of

right, this feeling of moral obligation, which so many have striven in vain to confound with perceptions at least as different therefrom as sight from hearing, would surely be impossible in any creature who did not realize something of eternity in the authority before which he bows. And once more this sense of eternity is inseparable from the thought of that everlasting substance of which all changeful existences are but fragmentary modes. In truth it makes all the difference in the world whether we consider phenomena altogether apart from their source, or whether we recognise in all things the outcome of an eternal power which can never be wholly revealed. The former is the position of Positivism. The latter is the essential idea in all religions, properly so-called; and a true philosophy of ignorance will not deny its possibility. Allow the legitimate character of that position, and human history is like the growth of a living soul. Deny it, and all the majesty of human effort is nothing more than the illusion of a kaleidoscope.

Farther than this we cannot go, without insisting on facts of human nature which hardly come into view in any discussion on the philosophy of ignorance. It is enough if we have found room for the faith which will hereafter be urged on other grounds, that some whispers heard from beyond the deepest hum of personal life, tell a true tale of our relationship to a living universal substance in which all things have their being. For this is all that is needed to give at

least possible significance and power to all forms of inspiring religion which the world has known. Because the dimmest notion of that eternal majesty gives an object of religious devotion compared with which the Comtist abstraction of humanity is unreal and ineffectual. Besides, when once the indefeasible reality of this eternal Being, too real to be fully known, is grasped by the heart, then the simplicity which comes of genuine fervour will see in whatever is brightest and best in the nature of man hints of the light that is unapproachable. The love of truth for its own sake, too proud an emotion for any but a nature which feels its roots in eternal life; the heroism in the cause of righteousness, which finds no explanation save in the faith, professed or not, that a man may so expend the energy of his life as to diffuse it through the glory of an everlasting kingdom; the aspirations which, like Jacob's ladder, reach from earth to heaven, and have no issue except in some infinite good; all of them seem to be utterances, translated into the language of the heart, out of the infinite silence of God.

Nay more, grant only that the vision of the world is but so many phases of an eternal life, the certainty of which is felt in our own souls; and then, though infinite knowledge be impossible, yet that life is felt; because its fragmentary manifestations break forth upon us in all the forms of nature. For oftentimes what is not seen, but only vaguely hinted, constitutes all the glory of what is seen and known. Thus I have

stood in a rift of the rocks, where the outlook commanded only an embayed strip of rugged and iron-bound coast. There, close at hand, a tiny waterfall, in curves like the sport of a graceful child, and in silvery sheets of transparent tissue, plashed down the face of the crag, and was silenced in the foam beneath. And I knew that the true explanation of the grandeur and tenderness I felt, was not in the narrow picture I saw, but in the wide wild sea which was hidden from view, and in the stretching moorland with winding brooks above. For the waves that fretted there below had rolled from the unknown ocean round the pole; and the cascade babbled of peace above, unassailable by the weary sea. But taken away from its almost inarticulate associations, the scene might almost as well have been a quarry into which a town-sewer had broken. To us all the deepest interest of creation's beauty springs not so much from what it expresses as from what it suggests. It is as the phase of an infinite splendour, as the pulse of a boundless energy that it awakens the noblest emotions. But convince us that it is a gigantic collection of utterly dead atoms, or a dance of inane molecules; and there can be no reason except something in ourselves, why Chamounix or Niagara should impress us differently from a dust-heap or a sandstorm.

Thus our ignorance of true substance and of the totality of things receives another touch of light. For when we see in all things the outcome of an eternal

life, we feel that it is possible for us, as we are taught by the apostle Paul, to "know in part." Not only in the Word, but in the work of creation, "the Life was manifested and we have seen it." Indeed, our whole distinction of substance and phenomenon, is an accommodation of reality to the necessities of thought. For it would perhaps be just as true to say that the phenomenon *is* the substance partially perceived and varying with our point of view. It is only because we cannot see all things at once that we see nothing in its true relations, and therefore nothing as it is. So, too, because we cannot see everything at once we cannot conceive that which is beyond all relations; and therefore we cannot know the absolute unity of all things. Hence we cannot think at all without feeling that there must be a difference between our apprehension of things and things as they are. Some such difference we try to represent to ourselves by saying that we apprehend only the apparent surface or phenomenon, not the inner reality. Yet the apparent surface is an affection or mode of the reality; and we know therefore something of the reality in that appearance. Thus the glitter of polished marble may seem to a curious child only to conceal—certainly not to reveal—the nature of the dull rough substance which a blow of the hammer brings out. But yet he will soon learn that the polished surface does express to him a real characteristic of the underlying substance, and one which could not in any other way have been

made perceptible to him; that is the "grain" the crystalline arrangement of molecules. Of course, all is phenomenal here; but it may illustrate the truth, that every phenomenon in the universe may express to us some phase of reality which could not in any other way have been brought into consciousness. In that sense we actually know true substance "in part," when we know phenomena. But we are unable to conceive it as it is; because in order to do that, we should be obliged to take into view all phenomena that exist, or are even possible. Hence the truth of the apostolic aphorism before quoted: "if any man thinketh that he knoweth anything,"—that is "root and all, and all in all,"—"he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know it." For he ought to be aware that he knows only "in part."

"My heart and flesh cryeth out for the living God," says the Psalmist. How true an expression that is of some of the deepest longings of mankind! For it is not merely the desire after a familiar shrine—not only a craving for some avenging strength—that speaks in these words; but the hunger after an assurance that the inmost reality of existence is something not utterly foreign to the affections of the heart. This is not the place for enlarging on the position which this desire has held in the history of mankind. But certainly they delude themselves, who suppose that the power of the mystical element in religion can ever be accounted

for, apart from some conscious relationship between our souls and the enduring substance in which all things are one. Our ignorance has been fully admitted: while we have insisted upon the positive element which it implies. And the result of our whole argument is that this ignorance is not such as to make the consciousness of such a relationship impossible or unmeaning. My enjoyment of Nature is raised beyond mere sensuous gratification, is touched with the intenser though more solemn delight of reverence, just in proportion as I feel the beautiful vision to be forever arising from a mystery of Being which involves all possible grace and energy and life in itself. "Lo, these are a part of His ways, but how little a portion is known of Him!" The soul that realizes the world thus, finds reverence to be the highest result of knowledge; and that not sentimentally only, but practically; because in reverence are contained the subordination of self to purposes grander than ambition, the simple susceptibility, the self-forgetful charity and sympathy, which co-ordinate our energies, and sanctify them as tributaries to a universal divine work. And since not only without, but also and more directly within, we feel the nearness of eternal Being, the universal tendency to worship will be found to have a significance which neither irrational dogma on the one hand, nor plausible materialism on the other, can ever utterly degrade, or completely explain away. The words of the Great

Master, "God is a Spirit," are far from being inconsistent with the humble acknowledgment of our mortal ignorance; while, at the same time, they keep before our minds the truth that this ignorance is itself the assertion of a majesty behind the veil. For the word "Spirit"—and the same remark would apply to its Greek original—does not at all necessarily imply the contradictory conception of a personality at once infinite and defined, or an omniscience susceptible to successions of thought. The word "Spirit" may rather be taken as an abstraction of all phenomenal definition including of course molecular vibrations. But that abstraction leaves still the vast, dim, yet unconquerable assurance of an essential Substance, which is not, cannot be dead, though the life we instinctively attribute to it is inconceivable. And that Life is inconceivable just because it comprehends all modes of being, all possibilities of spontaneous energy in one, and is, as it were, the apotheosis of modes in the modeless Infinite at which they hint.

As, in a narrow isle, whatever path we follow it soon ends in the pathless sea, and all movements have one destiny; so in our narrow life thought never travels far before it looks out on that which it cannot measure or define; which was, and is, and is to come. This the Everlasting is the only Substance, of which all things are phenomena. This is the abiding Power of which the recurrent sequences of natural law are fragmentary

manifestations. This is the all-pervading life which makes the heavens to smile, and the twinkling leaves to dance, and the clouds to frown, and the winds and the waves to sing their "song which is wild and slow." In any scientific sense, nay, in any but the vaguest intellectual sense, that Being is in Itself unknown, unknowable. Yet the inevitable fascination, with which it draws the dumb, pleading desire of all noblest souls, is a burning fact that shines through all the history of man, and which, were there no adequate significance within it, would convict the universe of vanity and lies. As to the nature of that significance we have given some suggestions; but it is a matter that is best treated by itself. Meanwhile when we acknowledge that unspeakable majesty as in Itself unknown, unknowable, we have insisted that this ignorance should not, cannot be interpreted as describing absolute nonentity of perception or apprehension. For that cannot with any reason be affirmed of anything that is an essential element in all rational thought, and the inspiration of the purest passion. It is no mere paradox to affirm that this very ignorance is itself knowledge, in so far as it implies the existence of an incomprehensible object. For we cannot think far in any direction without coming upon that which is more than all our knowledge, something that is and must be in itself unknown, not because it is uncertain, but because it is far too real for our

superficial faculties. We cannot mark phenomena without thinking of substance. We cannot admire the ordered system of the universe without aspiring in imagination to law above law, until at the topmost height one inconceivable stream of force springs into a myriad channels of harmonious action. We cannot feel the world's heart beat in the ceaseless energy of living things without adoring an all-pervading Life. Yet substance, law, power and life are only names of the unutterable; the last murmurs upon the lip when different paths of knowledge open on those measureless contemplations which command the worship of silence.

III.

THE ANTITHESIS OF FAITH AND SIGHT.

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"We walk by faith, not by sight," says the Apostle. "Seeing is believing," says common sense, whether in the humble guise of the shrewd practical mind, or in that sublimer form in which it is called inductive Science. Now each of these utterances characterizes by a single phrase—not properly two opposing schools of belief and unbelief—but rather two inherent, ineradicable tendencies or energies of human nature, which are to be found in every man alike; and which are not only not inconsistent, but are positively necessary the one to the other. In fact, they can no more be dissociated than the opposite poles of a magnet. No single man is what he is, and no school of thought exercises its special influence, exclusively by force of the one tendency or of the other. But if some intellects and some philosophies seem to exhibit only the power of faith, and others only dependence on sight, this is

because the faculties immediately inspired by the one energy or the other have been specially cultivated and become the objects of more or less exclusive attention, not only on the part of hearers and readers, but also on the part of the speakers and writers concerned. Yet, as the runner, who specially develops the muscles of his legs, is dependent for his balance on those of his back and arms, of which he does not think so much; and as the rower, proud of his biceps, depends for its successful exercise on the firmness of his legs, of which perhaps, in the excessive strain on his loins and arms, he is almost unconscious; so, sight gives form to faith, and faith gives significance to sight, even in the case of those who pre-eminently and with apparent exclusiveness cultivate the one or the other. For the Apostle of faith was very much dependent, as indeed he emphatically declares, on the fact that he had "seen the Lord;" and Dr. Tyndall himself would probably acknowledge that not only imagination but faith has a great deal to do with the grandest generalizations of science.

But such observations as these may mean little, nothing, or anything, unless we explain the sense in which we use our terms. Let us therefore begin by trying clearly to understand one another as to what we mean when we speak of faith and sight as being each the *antithesis* of the other. For this word antithesis is too often used loosely, in the sense of mutually-destructive contrariety. But that is certainly not

the sense in which it is used in the title of this essay. What is meant is rather the mutually-sustaining opposition of two forces which are ultimately, though often inscrutably, one energy, in the activity of which divergence of direction is inherent and essential. Thus electricity, which is generally recognised as one single inscrutable force, manifests itself in two divergent forms, positive and negative. So all polarized forces, such as those concerned in the mysterious process of crystallization, exhibit an illustration of antithesis in which two divergent modes of action are absolutely essential the one to the other. What is meant then by the antithesis of faith and sight is not their inconsistency or incongruity; but, if we may so express it, their polarized unity. This however will scarcely cease to be enigmatical, unless we come to a farther understanding as to what we mean by these words faith and sight. Let us take sight first, because it is more easily understood, and because there is less likelihood of any disagreement about it.

To walk by sight—in contradistinction to walking by faith—is, it may be supposed, pretty much equivalent to dependence on that positive knowledge which is the professed domain of the "positive philosophy." Thus we walk by sight when we are guided by the immediate evidence of our own senses; as when we know day from night by the direct appeal of the daylight to the eyes. Similarly we know that land is

solid and water is yielding, by the evidence of the senses. But if the idea of walking by sight were confined to such cases, it is clear that it would be applicable to a very small part of life. For we are concerned with ten thousand things which are beyond the reach of our senses, and with ten thousand more which we know only through the senses of others. No one, so far as we know, ever saw the North Pole; and very few comparatively have seen the hydrogen flames in the sun's atmosphere. Yet both the former and the latter belong to the field of positive knowledge; and in acknowledging them we walk by sight, not by faith. For, as we shall presently try to show, belief on the testimony of others is not properly faith at all. It is one of three things, each of which is very different from faith: it is either an acknowledgment of proof positive, such as after careful criticism cannot be resisted; or it is uncertainty; or it is folly.

But it is better to proceed one step at a time. Clearly it is impossible to limit the area of positive knowledge to the things we have seen with our own eyes or felt with our own hands. And the first extension we should make is this; that whatever is involved in the appearance we observe, so that to suppose the absence of it would make the appearance inherently incongruous and self-contradictory, that also is a part of positive knowledge. For instance, if, when standing on the shore, we see a vessel on the distant horizon making way against wind and tide, we know very

well without the use of a telescope that she is a steamer. True, we cannot see the engines nor the screw, and the smoke is too faint to be discerned; but to suppose her not a steamer makes the appearance which we observe incoherent and self-contradictory. Or, in other words, the fact of our seeing her make head against wind and tide involves the fact of her being moved by steam. Therefore we say without any hesitation that we positively know she is a steamship. Similarly we know that there is a North Pole, that is, a point on the earth's surface in the northern regions, round which the whole horizon revolves. Not only have we not seen it, but no one else has; and yet we are sure that it is there, because to suppose it wanting would make all the observed facts of astronomy inconsistent and absurd. But it would be a misuse of terms to say that in reference to the North Pole we walk by faith, not by sight. Such a misuse is not uncommon in theological accommodations between reason and faith; but it is wholly fallacious and unfair, making faith the corollary of sight, instead of its antithesis. In the same way the whole science of astronomy is dependent on the evidence of the senses; not wholly on what they directly reveal, but to a considerable extent on what is necessarily involved in the appearances presented. Thus no one can see the earth going round the sun; indeed, we seem to see precisely the contrary. But the apparent motions of the sun and planets in the sky, when

properly observed, have been found absolutely to involve the central position of the sun; so that if anything else be supposed, those motions become incoherent and absurd.

Another extension which we must make of the area of positive knowledge, in which we walk by sight, has been already suggested: we must regard it as comprehending the innumerable instances in which we walk by the sight of others rather than by our own. For instance, anatomy is a positive science in which we walk by sight, not by faith; yet perhaps not one person in a hundred has ever dissected even a frog. With regard to such subjects most of us are and must be content to see through the eyes of others, who have given themselves to the pursuit of special knowledge. And yet it is not fair to give the name of faith to our reliance upon the observations made by means of the senses of others. For the facts which are thus gathered, after fighting for their life against hostile criticism, become finally acknowledged as the property of a common human experience. It is not unbelief, in the theological sense, but only ignorance, folly, or insanity, which can deny them. Our confident assurance of those things, which through the eyes and ears of some have entered into the common stock of human knowledge, must necessarily be very different indeed from belief in those things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. And it is manifest that the latter, not the former answers to the religious idea of faith.

Farther, we are bound to extend the area of positive knowledge to all those truths which are treated as certainly known because the supposition of their contraries is impossible or absurd. Thus it is not by faith that the mathematician believes the axioms of Euclid, but simply because of the impossibility of thinking the contrary. That "things which are equal to the same are equal to one another" is a truth clear at once to any mind capable of understanding its terms, without the slightest necessity for ocular demonstration. And yet the man who professes to require anything like mathematical proof for the articles of his belief would be regarded by the theologian—and rightly regarded —as obstinately determined to walk by sight, not by faith.

To recapitulate; positive knowledge includes, first, all that we observe by means of our own senses; secondly, all that is involved in such observations, so that we cannot deny it without making the appearance incoherent and self-contradictory; thirdly, all that we learn on satisfactory evidence through the senses of others; and finally, all truths the contrary of which is unthinkable.

Now common sense would suggest that what St. Paul meant, when he talked of walking by sight, would be practically equivalent to confinement within this area of positive knowledge: and this is what ought to be meant by theologians, when they distinguish between sight and faith. But some will be inclined to com-

plain that in this sketch we have described all the modes in which men can come to know anything; and that we have left no room at all for the idea of walking by faith. This complaint is likely to be made not only by the unbeliever who does not care about faith, but also by the religionist who defines faith as belief on probable evidence, that is, reliance on the eyes of other people. What!—the latter will exclaim—is not our faith in Christianity just a reliance on the evidence of credible witnesses? We reply; your *knowledge* of the facts of Christian history does certainly depend on historical evidence; but to whatever extent such knowledge is possible, you are walking by sight not by faith. There is indeed a sense in which all reliance on the testimony of others and even on the evidence of our own senses involves faith. But probably it is a sense much more subtle and profound than is usually suspected; though it is hoped that some light may be thrown upon it in succeeding pages. For the present, however, it is sufficient to observe that if in regard to the facts of astronomy we walk by sight though we are dependent on the eyes of others, it is surely most arbitrary to deny that the same thing is true of historical events which we learn in a similar manner. Both sets of facts alike must necessarily depend for their reception on the evidence they present that they are, or have been, matters of sight, not of fancy. And the confusion between the reception of such evidence and the far

different power of faith is one of the most fruitful causes of the religious perplexities of the time. How often do preachers tell men to walk by faith, not by sight, and then urge upon them what is only another way of walking by sight! Says the strict secularist, 'I will believe nothing but what is proved to me by the evidence of my senses;' a shallow utterance it may be; yet certainly not intended to exclude all dependence on the senses of others. 'Oh, but you should walk by faith,' says the Christian advocate; and then straightway urges that John and Peter and Paul saw the Lord after He had risen from the dead. Well, this consideration has a legitimate place in Christian teaching; but that is in connection with our probable knowledge of facts, in regard to which we walk by sight, that is, the sight of others, just as much as most of us do in regard to the form and constitution of the solar system.

This explanation however would probably give no satisfaction to our supposed interlocutor. It would rather seem to confirm his objection, which is, that in endeavouring to assign to faith and sight their respective provinces, we have at the outset given over the whole sphere of knowledge and even of probable belief to sight, and have thus left no room for the action of faith at all. But then no one ought to expect to find room for faith in the proper domain of *knowledge*, or even in that of probable opinion. True, there is one aspect in which, just as the

mediums of light and sound interpenetrate one another round the whole sphere of the earth, so faith and sight are inseparable throughout the universe of mind, as it is known to us. Still, in their subtlest interaction it is possible to distinguish them; and half our religious miseries arise from their confusion. What then is faith? If it is not perception, nor knowledge, nor probable opinion, what is it? Some wise and good men would tell us that it is an intuition. But as we should probably find a difficulty in agreeing upon the exact meaning of the word, let us avoid it. And farther, as the suggestion which we have to offer would make religious faith only the special form of a much more general mental faculty, it must not be supposed that our explanations of that general faculty necessarily describe all the characteristics which connote the special form.

Before all sight there is a susceptibility to sight; and before all judgments there is a power of forming judgments. It may be perfectly true that a baby has to practise a great deal before it can see rightly; but it is also true that if it were born with buttons in the place of eyes, it would never see at all. Similarly it may be quite true that the earliest sense of sight is a confused feeling of light and colour, without any consciousness of an impulse to say or think "this is myself," or "that is a bright colour." But unless that tendency were there, the child would be no more than a photographic camera; and the mind would never be awakened. The sense

philosophy of modern times has not been in the least too iconoclastic in its destruction of such innate ideas as may have survived Locke; but still it has never succeeded in analyzing the whole subjective life into the vibrations of air and ether and nerve-tissue, by which the outward world affects us. Granted that no truths of morality, or theology, or mathematics are even latent in the germinal consciousness; granted even that no blank schedules exist in the unborn brain ready to be filled in with the classified objects of observation; still, in the germ of rational life there is something which gives all its significance to sight. However far we go back towards the undated dawn of consciousness, that can never be accurate reasoning which, in tracing back the complete result of the relation between subject and object, altogether neglects one side of the problem. For surely in the growth from obscure sensation to distinct perception and accurate judgment, the living subject must have its part to play, as well as the objects presented. In fact it is on account of some inherent differences in the living subjects affected, that the grove, which produces in the brain of the beast only a dim recognition of a convenient lair, excites in the human Barbarian feelings of wonder or even reverence. It is not the surrounding soil only, nor the sun and rain, which produce from one seed an oak, and from another a carrot. But there exists in these seeds a certain predisposition, excluding all possibility of development except within certain de-

finite limits. And so, if surrounding circumstances make anything at all of the one seed, they must make an oak of it; if they make anything at all of the other, they must produce a carrot. All this may seem mere truism; but it is a truism of which it is necessary to remind ourselves, when the sense of philosophy is carried to such a pitch that the feeling of sublimity which we have, in view of a vast expanse of scenery, is supposed to be explained by the pleasure experienced in exerting the abductor muscles of the eye. We do not at all need to deny the association of the feeling with that particular muscular sense; but surely it is well to bear in mind that, apart from some predisposition in the living subject, there can be no reason why the exertion of these muscles should produce the feeling of sublimity in a man more than in an ape or a hog.

We say then, that from the very beginning of life there are two sets of forces to be considered in regard to the development of consciousness and all its contents. There are the forces of the external world presenting themselves in sight and sound, in taste, and smell, and touch; but then there are also inward energies predisposed to form out of such materials, within definite limits, one kind of consciousness and not another. Watch the warehouseman as he catches the parcels which are flung at him from the van, and ranges them here or there as may best facilitate the organization of business. He is an emblem of the mysterious predisposition inherent in every living

germ, from the lichen up to man, and which, receiving the materials flung at it from the outer world, suffers them not to fall in a heap, but ranges them here and there according to the special form of organization which it is to build up. Now with the mere elaboration of tissue we have at present nothing to do; but precisely the same thing is true concerning the formation and the furnishing of consciousness. Here also there are two sets of forces at work; both of which are absolutely necessary to the result. For a baby shut up in a box, if it could be kept alive at all, would never be anything more than a baby. And, on the other hand, an ape under the best instruction would never grow up into a man. But in the untaught human infant there are susceptibilities, and more than susceptibilities—strong predispositions—which seize the impressions as they come in from the world without, and build them up into the kingdom of a human soul. On those predispositions all processes of argument depend for validity; for if the facts, when fairly stated, can only be regarded in one way, this is because the mind is so constituted as to see a certain significance in them. Granting even that the axioms of Euclid are learnt by observation, still the perception that one case contains all other possible cases is surely due to a re-action not to be accounted for apart from some innate predisposition, which distinguishes the rational from the irrational living subject. It is of course perfectly true that the infant does not see the universal axiom

in the single case. But that is only because the single case is not, and cannot be, adequately presented to it. For the universal truth, that things which are equal to the same are equal to one another, cannot be seen in any case until the notion of equality has been acquired. But this notion again never could be acquired unless there were a predisposition to the formation of judgments on the measurement and comparison of spaces or weights. In a word, sight is not everything. Indeed it is meaningless, unless where it addresses itself to a predisposition to make something of it. Or the truth may be stated thus; that there is a pre-established harmony between the living germ and the world into which it is launched; and this harmony is of such a character that only a limited set of relations are possible, while amongst these, again, some are felt to be much more natural or fully harmonious than others. In other words, the line of least resistance, along which development must advance, is determined not by external circumstances alone, but by the relation between these and an already existing predisposition in the germ. As then we have excluded faith from the whole realm of sight or positive knowledge, let us try if we cannot find its true place in the realm of predisposition. Of course, predisposition in itself is not faith. But if it should turn out that, though all predispositions are from their very nature involuntary, yet some may depend for their practical force upon the loyalty, so to

speak, with which the will seeks to act up to them, then we shall find here a very sufficient idea of faith. But of this more presently. Meanwhile, let us see what there is in consciousness, which manifestly is due to the predispositions of which we speak.

In entering upon such an enquiry, probably the first idea of many would be to divide mental phenomena for the present purpose into two classes, one of which can be shown to be due to some inherent predisposition, while the other is evidently not. But a moment's thought will show that such a classification is impossible. For of course we are only concerned with intelligent consciousness. And we shall search in vain for any phenomena whatever of intelligent consciousness, which are not due in part to predisposition. The assertion that men see in everything what they bring to it has at least this much truth, that there is no act of perception and no judgment, in which the living subject does not contribute to the result, perhaps at least as much as the perceived object. The various impressions produced upon different people by the same object, as for instance in colour blindness, may illustrate this observation sufficiently for our present purpose; which does not require, and indeed will not permit, any abstruse enquiry into the ultimate significance of perception. Granting the reality of the outer world, the reason why it means more to us than it does to brutes must lie in a predisposition to find more in it. It may indeed be objected that the word

susceptibility would express our meaning more accurately than predisposition. And if only the full significance of the former word were acknowledged, we might be quite content with it. For a susceptibility, or a capacity for taking up an impression, is not merely passive; it is active; inasmuch as it re-acts upon the impression, and makes the latter to be what it was not before, a special form of consciousness. The word predisposition emphasizes this activity inherent in living susceptibility; and therefore, always with the understanding that it means nothing which has any power apart from some external stimulus, we may prefer the term we have used.

But if it is impossible to find any class of conscious mental phenomena in which predisposition is not involved, it only remains to see *how* it is involved, and what is the office which it discharges in all the operations of the mind. We shall find in it an ever-present antithesis to sight, and shall be able to understand how, under certain conditions specially involved in the working of the moral nature, it becomes the occasion, or gives the opportunity, for that virtue which we call faith. We assert then that predisposition is manifested in certain general assumptions, which always underlie the conscious form that the mind gives to impressions made from without. And our first illustration may be taken from our inevitable belief in an external world.

"Seeing is believing," says common sense. But the

true Pyrrhonist will tell us he is not so sure of that; or that the proverb is a meaningless truism at the best. He urges that all we know, when reduced to its simple elements, consists only in so many forms of our own consciousness; and that our belief in something else beyond and outside of ourselves, which occasions or creates these forms of consciousness, is pure assumption incapable of proof. That it is assumption we are compelled to admit; for the simple reason that no major premiss can be found which will enable us to construct a strictly logical proof. The common argument we imagine to be something of this sort:—"Whatever resists my will is outside of me; this table resists my will when I try to push it out of the way; therefore the table is outside of me." But the major premiss will not bear a moment's examination. For certainly some things resist our will which cannot on any ground be supposed to be outside of us. Pain always resists our will to get rid of it; and yet whatever view may be taken of the connection of mind and matter, pain is, in its essence, an affection of consciousness, and cannot be outside of us at all. And, similarly, it might be shown that every other conceivable major premiss is unsound on the face of it, or else is a simple postulate of the thing to be proved. But if the Pyrrhonist means, by "pure assumption," groundless assumption, we must hold him to be wrong. For the real ground of belief in an external world is a predisposition inherent in and essential to our nature; a

predisposition which, under sense impressions, gradually develops that belief, as unerringly and inevitably as an acorn germinating under sun and rain brings forth the oak. Or to recur, for the sake of binding our thoughts together, to language used above, the pre-established harmony between the germinating soul and the world into which it is launched is such, that it can no more help arriving at a recognition of the externality of the world than it can be conscious and unconscious at one and the same moment of time. Thus, in every act of perception, we have two antithetical tendencies, the one exciting attention to impressions which are certainly in ourselves; the other insisting on projecting the cause of these impressions beyond ourselves. The one tendency lies in sense, of which, in St. Paul's words, sight is taken as the type. The other tendency is a predisposition roused by the stimulus of sight, and may typify, though only very generally and faintly, the faith whose province we are seeking to establish.

The bearing of this idea upon faith in the more ordinary acceptation of the word will be at least a little more apparent, if we bear in mind the sort of argument, or rather quasi-argument—for it is nothing but an appeal to predisposition—by which men of strong practical sense and warm feelings sometimes maintain against dreamy sceptics the reality of an external world. "You tell me," urges such an one, "that all the sights and sounds I know are in myself,

not out of me; and that I cannot be sure they imply anything more than phenomena of my own consciousness. Well, at any rate, they *seem* to imply it; they have inevitably led me to assume it; and I cannot think myself deluded without making the whole of my life—that is, as you say, *all* life and all existence, and the whole universe—a lie. But this is simply intolerable. It is absurd to the intellect, and repugnant to the heart. Therefore, proof or no proof, I stick to the external world." Now, this is a very simple but a very real instance of faith, with at least a faint religious tinge. It is the loyalty of the will to a predisposition which, though it cannot justify itself by a syllogism, is felt to be a law of our being.

We may find another illustration of the predispositions, which lie at the basis of all our positive know ledge, in the confidence with which we rely upon the order of nature for the future as well as the past. For in the view of the present writer, the argument of Canon Mozley, in his Bampton Lectures for 1865 is, so far as this part of his subject is concerned, incapable of refutation. At least Dr. Tyndall, who, if any man could, would surely have done it, has not only failed to refute him, but has declined to touch the real point of the argument. Let us recall the passage quoted by Dr. Tyndall himself in his paper on "Miracles and Special Providences."*

* *Fortnightly Review* (New Series), Vol. I., p. 645.

"That any cause in nature is more permanent than its existing and known effects, extending further, and about to produce other and more instances besides what it has produced already, we have no evidence. Let us imagine," he continues, "the occurrence of a particular physical phenomenon for the first time. Upon that single occurrence we should have but the very faintest expectation of another. If it did occur again, once or twice, so far from counting on another occurrence, a cessation would occur as the most natural event to us. But let it continue one hundred times, and we should find no hesitation in inviting persons from a distance to see it: and if it occurred every day for years, its occurrence would be a certainty to us, its cessation a marvel. . . . . What ground of reason can we assign for an expectation that any part of the course of nature will be the next moment what it has been up to this moment, *i.e.*, for our belief in the uniformity of nature? None. No demonstrative reason can be given; for the contrary to the recurrence of a fact of nature is no contradiction. No probable reason can be given, for all probable reasoning respecting the course of nature is founded *upon* this presumption of likeness, and therefore cannot be the foundation of it. No reason can be given for this belief. It is without a reason. It rests upon no rational grounds, and can be traced to no rational principle."

The real issue of such an argument is, perhaps, not quite that which Dr. Mozley intended. But of this presently. What we now urge is that Dr. Tyndall's eloquent description of the majestic fabric of science reared upon the basis which Dr. Mozley calls an unreasoning impulse, is not precisely the refutation which the above passage seemed to demand. We find a most interesting and beautiful account given us of the success which has attended scientific research whenever based upon the fundamental assumption of

a persistent order in nature. But what was required was the *ground* of this assumption; and that Dr. Tyndall does not give us. No doubt, when once the persistency of that order is allowed, the process of induction may be fairly characterized as a "welding of rigid logic to verifying fact." But Dr. Mozley's argument is that, in each and every inference which goes beyond experience of actual cases, we are obliged to assume, what we cannot prove, that a certain relation of phenomena in nature "is more permanent than its existing and known effects, extending further, and about to produce other and more instances besides what it has produced already." The truth is, the impulse of which Dr. Mozley speaks is so essential to every rational application of our faculties, and is acted upon so much as a matter of course, that many readers of his argument must have failed to apprehend his meaning; because they could not to their own consciousness dissociate experience from the underlying assumption which gives it all its value. Thus, if asked why they confidently expect the sun to rise to-morrow morning, they would reply that experience proves it always does rise at its proper time. Now that is scarcely an accurate statement; for the indefinite present tense is made to cover the unknown future, as well as the past with which alone experience can deal. Certainly, within the range of experience, the sun always *has risen* at its proper time; and this therefore is matter of positive knowledge. But to-

morrow morning is not within the range of experience; and if we are sure that the inference from experience will hold good, it is only because we assume the persistent order of nature. It may be urged, however, that this assumption of a future uniformity in particular cases is based upon a wide induction of innumerable manifestations of a universal order, and is rationally proved thereby. It is not merely because one phenomenon has happened innumerable times, that we can confidently predict its recurrence; but because all phenomena, when examined, are found to be governed by regular laws, which make them under similar conditions persistent. But this only throws the assumption farther back in our mental history. For if it be granted that, in any particular case, we infer the permanence of one observed relation of phenomena because general experience has shown that calculations based upon such observations have always been verified; still when we look to the future, and say that similar calculations always will be verified, we are assuming more than we have proved—that the order of nature is persistent. The illustrious critic of Dr. Mozley's argument must have been, of course, well aware of all that could be urged on this point. And if he has given us no ground for our confidence in the future persistence of natural order, other than our observation that up to the present moment it has been persistent, we may venture to believe that no other ground can be given. But that ground is, as Mr. Mozley in effect argues,

simply an assumption that the future will be like the present because the present is like the past.

The description of this assumption, as the result of an "unintelligent impulse," is perhaps unfortunate. Our suggestion is that the impulse is one of those predispositions which lie in the germs of rational life. It is a part of the pre-established harmony between the young soul and the world, of which the former forms a part. It is no innate idea. It is no intuition. It is, at first, a latent tendency which needs the stimulus of sight to arouse it; but which, when awakened, re-acts upon sight, and gives it form. Undismayed and unrepressed by the chaotic confusion of first observation, the predisposition to find the one in the many meets the outward by an inward light, and under its illumination the phantasmagoria of the infant's world becomes the ordered universe of the sage. Yet, as already hinted, the true issue of the argument would seem to be very different from that maintained by Dr. Mozley. For confidence in the order of the world being sustained in the last result by a predisposition inherent in the rational soul, it is that order—not miracles—which is matter of faith. Miracles, on the other hand, must needs appeal to sight; and all presumption being against them, must be sustained by evidence which will bear dispassionate criticism. Be it observed that this does not at all *necessarily* involve any conclusion adverse to miracles. But, on any interpretation of the meaning of the word,

and on any view of the spiritual history of mankind, it must be admitted that miracles address themselves to the senses. And therefore, to whatever extent our religion is dependent upon miracles, presented immediately to our own perceptions, or mediately through the historically established perceptions of others, to that extent we walk by sight, not by faith. Still there is, as we hinted above, a sense in which miracles, whether actually witnessed or received as credible, may appeal to faith as well as to sight. But we are not quite prepared to enter upon that yet.

Let us consider another instance of the effect which inherent predisposition has upon conclusions from sight. As is indicated in Dr. Mozley's words above quoted, and implied in Dr. Tyndall's criticism, our confidence in the order of nature is made up of two elements. We are not only predisposed to believe that a phenomenon, which has presented itself a hundred times under certain conditions, will be exhibited also the hundred and first time if the same conditions are renewed; but we are predisposed to find a reason for it in "a cause which is more permanent than any existing or known effects." We need not insist at present upon the mere belief in efficient causes. For it may be fairly argued that this is simply the result of our experience that, in order to produce any result, we must ourselves expend energy; though even if that be admitted, the irresistible tendency to impute efficient force where we do not impute

consciousness, would seem to indicate that there is something more here than merely false analogy. But what is more remarkable is the strength of our predisposition to believe in the persistent existence, in some form, of efficient causes, even when their phenomenal effects are discontinuous. A simple race, who see a quiet sheltered pool periodically disturbed by some internal commotion, may believe that it is the work of an angel who descends now and then for the purpose. A more experienced observer will probably suspect an intermittent spring. When the pool is quiet, the simple people suppose that the angel is gone back again to heaven; while the sceptic may think that the subterranean overflow, having been exhausted, is gathering its forces again. But both alike believe in the persistence of the cause which produces the periodic effect. Neither imagines for a moment that the productive force is created at each recurrence of the phenomenon, and absolutely annihilated when it is over. And both alike believe—not because they see, but because they cannot help it—because they are so constituted that they must regard intermittent but regular phenomena as dependent on a persistent cause. Similarly, when we hear eloquent natural philosophers discoursing on the regular operation of natural law, we always and necessarily conceive of a persistent force underlying it even when the phenomena are discontinuous and apparently isolated. Perhaps this is the stronger, as it is certainly the more

rational element of the two, in our predisposition to infer the future from the past. The mere instinctive expectation that a phenomenon, repeated a hundred times, will recur the hundred and first time, may be rightly described by Dr. Mozley as a non-rational impulse; but, as Dr. Tyndall has admirably shown in his criticism, "the scientific mind can find no repose in the mere registration of sequence in nature." And, as he farther goes on to show,—though without reference to our point—it is precisely this predisposition, to find abiding power under changeful appearances, which has been the highest inspiration of science. Indeed it is just this predisposition which has invested recent doctrines on the "correlation of forces" with a truly poetic beauty. The eternity and the changeless sufficiency of the one inscrutable Energy, which manifests itself in ten thousand forms, answers to the dumb longing of the human soul; and we find in it the satisfaction of centuries of desire. If, as we are told, "the material universe is the complement of the intellect," * it is because it answers to certain inherent predispositions, as cold water to the thirsty soul. And these predispositions, though *awakened*, are not *given* by sight; they are its antithesis, absolutely necessary to turn sight into perception.

As we have already observed, with the power of such predispositions as these the will has very little to do. Still, we can imagine that some daring specu-

* Dr. Tyndall, loc. cit.

lations of the natural philosopher may require at times much exertion of a feeling very like loyalty to the order of the world. And here an element of volition is introduced. For, however much the universal dominion of a law, like that of gravitation, may seem to us now a matter of course, there was a time when the apparent complexity and various eccentricity of movement amongst the heavenly bodies might well have daunted the boldness even of a Newton. But in the time of his reticence, between induction and verification, the predisposition to find in the starry maze one persistent, all-comprehensive force was strong within him. He felt that the grand principle which had dawned upon him *must be* the true one. The difference between him and common men was not so much any special strength in a predisposition which is found in all alike, but the sublime form in which the "complement" of that predisposition had appeared to him. The difference between him and less daring philosophers was not only superior scientific imagination, but also the greater steadfastness of loyal determination with which, through all apparent contradictions, he was faithful to the inward light which the outward fact had enkindled. Like Abraham, he staggered not at the magnificent promise which he had heard from the stars; but was strong in his faith, giving the glory of eternal order to God. And it was through faith, as much as through sight, that he laboured and finally triumphed.

But, when we come to apply the same principles to moral and religious life, the range of the will is enormously increased. It makes no matter at this point what interpretation is given to the word "will." At all events, the mental phenomenon commonly recognized by that term is much more prominently and constantly manifested in the effort to act up to acknowledged moral principles than in the evolution of speculative ideas on the basis of a discovered natural law. The maxim "be just and fear not" appeals to an inherent predisposition to believe that whatever inconveniences may be associated with a righteous course, it leads infallibly to results of a higher kind than can possibly be realized by unscrupulous expediency. But it is clear that faithfulness to this predisposition is much more a matter of vigorous volition than of intellectual consistency with theory. And the emotions which it kindles in the beholder are correspondingly different. For the admiration, which is excited by Newton's speculative boldness, pales before the sympathetic glow of loving reverence, which is awakened by the heroism of the martyr. Socrates, choosing obedience to the divine voice within rather than popularity, honour or life; and St. Paul mastering the anguish of a breaking heart with the words, "none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"—such

are the true types of faith; and in their undying power over human hearts they testify its everlasting place in the higher life of man.

We are now in a position to estimate the essential significance of religious faith, and the real meaning of its antithesis to sight; while, at the same time, we may see our way to understand the possible existence of a "like precious faith" under endless varieties of religious opinion. According to the idea which we are endeavouring to unfold, religious faith is steadfast obedience to certain special forms of predisposition which are involved in the adaptation of matured humanity to the outward universe or "complement of the ego." And the phrase "matured humanity" is here used, not in the sense of adult manhood, but in the generic sense of humanity as we know it. Our theory does not require us to suppose that man was suddenly created out of the dust of the ground; nor yet that the predispositions, upon the existence of which we have insisted, were at some one point of time miraculously communicated to some member of a previously brutish race. No matter what may have been the process by which humanity was developed from some unknown germ; as a present fact, these predispositions are now actually a part of the conditions which affect the growth of human consciousness. Again, we do not think our theory is affected, whatever may be the view preferred of the proximate causes which have gradually produced these predis-

positions. For, if it be granted that inheritance and transferred associations account for much that was formerly regarded as strictly intuitional, still there must be some reason in the living subject why the influences of the outer world have produced such results and not others. However long be the history of that gradual creation, which, in men's theories of the universe, is everywhere supplanting the old idea of sudden miracle, still the two factors of the problem exist; and we have no right to trace the whole of the product to one of these factors to the entire exclusion of the other. We say then that account for it as we may—but, certainly, from causes which cannot be exclusively assigned to the outer world—it has come to pass that every germinant human life is characterized by certain inherent predispositions, which are absolutely necessary to make contact with the world a human and not a merely animal experience. We do not therefore imply any theological opinion concerning the past history of mankind, when we assign to religious faith as its proper seat certain forms of predisposition which we proceed to explain. It will be understood, however, from the very hypothesis of the theory here advanced, that as sight is in no case entirely independent of predisposition, so faith everywhere requires sight for its awakening and development.

Notwithstanding the amazing theological theories engendered by a too literal interpretation of Biblical

metaphor, it may be safely affirmed that no sooner is a man capable of distinguishing moral good and evil, than he feels instinctively, to use common language, that good is stronger than evil, and must in the long run prevail. The inevitable and hopeless damnation of the overwhelming majority of mankind has indeed been ostentatiously, and even enthusiastically, proclaimed by perhaps the larger number of Christian preachers. But it is certain that they have not seen what their doctrine involves; and indeed have regarded the flames of hell as a lurid emblazonment of the triumph of righteousness. Farther, the simple conviction that God is stronger than the Devil has often been the turning point in a religious experience which has barely escaped despair and madness. It is true that here we may be supposed to find only reminiscences of certain catechetical instruction concerning "the attributes." But the warm feeling of loyalty, which such an expression of confidence never fails to kindle in the heart, seems to us indicative of a predisposition far more prevalent—thank Heaven—than any catechetical instruction. Nor again can we admit that this inherent tendency to recognize the superior might and finally assured triumph of goodness, is at all disproved by the melancholy of a dyspeptic conservatism, never tired of declaring that the country is "going to the dogs." For in such gloomy prophecies there is always a reserved expectation, that after the deluge rendered inevitable by a wicked liberalism, a

time will come for the restitution of all things. In fact, we do not believe that there lives a man, in the possession of full consciousness and sanity, who can realize to himself, as even possible, the final victory of falsehood, cowardice, and injustice. Or at any rate the toleration of such a conception does manifest violence to some pre-established harmony between our moral nature and the grand order of the world about us. We have the resistless feeling that in being good, that is, in rendering loyal obedience to the highest moral sanctions which we know, we are more true to the whole harmony of things than in disobedience; and we are incapable of believing that such truth and trust can find its final issue in discord, ruin and destruction.

Such a view is of course open to the obvious objection that the highest moral sanctions known to barbarous or superstitious men are often base and grovelling delusions, which introduce discord and misery into the whole relations of man to the world. The Hindoo, who thrusts great hooks into his back and allows himself to be swung in the air thereby in honour of his wretched idol, is, it may be urged, most loyally obedient to the highest moral sanctions that he knows. So also is the Christian monk or nun, who in honour of religion does violence to the most beautiful affections of humanity. And this is very true. But in such cases it is sight that is at fault rather than faith. False opinions, engendered by false inferences,

clothed by a glowing imagination in forms of terror, and handed down from generation to generation until they become like second nature, have distorted the notion of goodness, and have therefore perverted to false applications the predisposition of faith. But it remains not the less true that this predisposition exists; and inasmuch as it leads to self-sacrificing devotion, it is in itself good and noble, however repulsive and ignoble may be the forms of its expression. The proper office of sight is to communicate that higher knowledge, in the light of which the spectres of ignorance dissolve away, while faith meets its true object with the joy of the terrified dreamer when his opened eyes meet the calm and quiet dawn. That unsteady or uncritical sight may cheat us with false ideas of goodness and truth is matter, alas, of universal experience. But that justice and righteousness, when once discovered, have not only right, but in the long run, might and assured victory with them, is a confidence universal as errors of opinion are various, and suggests a predisposition which is as it were the matrix of religious faith.

Now let us assume, what indeed no one can very well deny, that in the prehistoric ages when men first began to wonder at the mysterious powers that move the heavens and earth, they also began to realize, no matter by what process, that moral sense which distinguishes amongst actions, not only the useful and the injurious, but also the right and the wrong. It may

be very true, at least it shall not be disputed here, that the former distinction preceded the latter, and by some process of development engendered it. That would no more prove the two sorts of distinction to be identical, than the probable development of our five bodily senses by means of differentiations in one common susceptible tissue makes sight and hearing to be the same. But let it be granted that some specially injurious actions began to have attributed to them the newly felt quality of guilt or moral wrong. Then, in addition to the rude penalties which society found a fresh satisfaction in inflicting upon its treacherous or cowardly members, this new moral sense, associating itself with the wonder and awe already felt at the glory of day and the terrors of night, would inevitably attribute a moral significance to the action of the mysterious powers above, around, beneath. It may of course be to a certain extent fairly maintained that this genesis of superstition, with its impersonation of strange or fearful-looking natural objects, was due wholly to false analogies between self and the world. But that explanation is not exhaustive. For though it suggests clearly enough the reason of the errors which a confused and superficial observation imposed on the living susceptibility to such impressions, it falls far short of explaining the predisposition, without which false observations of nature would have been as barren in the soul of man as they are in the brain of a beast.

The position maintained here is this; not that man

was aboriginally gifted with an intuition of any dogmatic truths of religion; but that in prehistoric times he was characterized by a predisposition not only to believe in the reality of an external world, and in the persistence of the forces which animated its movements, but also to see either in it or beyond it "an Eternal Power not himself, making for righteousness."* It is true indeed, that from prehistoric times we hear no articulate voice; but yet the silent monuments which are left us, such as primeval graves, with the hints they contain of belief in an unseen world, would lead us to think that many of the moral and spiritual ideas which we find imbedded in the earliest literature had already been developed. In the Homeric poems, as well as in the earliest records of Hebrew thought, we find clear traces of confidence in mysterious powers which maintained the sanctity of truth and justice. However fanciful Mr. Gladstone's discoveries of a semi-christian theology in Homer may be, he is fully justified in appealing to the invocations which preceded solemn oaths, as a proof that, notwithstanding all corruptions, the ethics of the heroic age involved a trust in divine dominion as the final sanction of righteousness. And of such a trust as this we maintain that it is impossible to give any reasonable account which does not involve a predisposition inherent in the very germs of humanity. Sight or observation, through which that predisposition worked,

* Matthew Arnold.—*Cornhill Magazine*, Oct., 1871.

and by which it was developed, might often through confusion, fear, or hasty generalization beget religious opinions that might fairly be described as a belief in devils rather than in gods. But the inextinguishable vitality of the nobler confidence was shown in the tendency to imagine, beyond the discordant councils of Olympus or Tartarus, a grander, a more than personal Power, which held gods and men alike in the bonds of an inexorable fate. When therefore in those old days, warriors or patriots were strengthened in their righteous stedfastness by reliance on the rule of the gods, or of some still more comprehensive Power, such men showed a force of character for which no observations of moral order or accumulated experience of progenitors could by any means exhaustively account. Their will went with the predisposition to regard good as stronger than evil; and so they exemplified the very essence of religious faith.

To guard against any possible misinterpretation it must be re-iterated here, that faith on this view is not any intellectual assent to the *theory* that good is stronger than evil; but practical and voluntary loyalty to a formative tendency which precedes every impression from the outward world. There is indeed a feeling that on a scale more comprehensive than any theoretic generalization can ever reach, good is the imperial power, and evil the servile foe. But no theory nor assent to theory is necessary to that loyalty of soul which, regardless of consequences, acts out this

feeling. And the legendary Curtius who closed the gaping abyss by the sacrifice of himself, or Leonidas and his Spartans exemplified this inmost vitality of faith, if not in so spiritual a form, yet quite as really as Abraham or Moses. They served the right as they knew it, and in their strong sense of its supremacy they set no bounds to the sacrifices which the assertion of this dominion might demand. Nor need we hesitate to recognize the same spirit in the vehement words of an illustrious modern philosopher; "I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not calling him, to hell I will go." * For such words amount only to the strenuous assertion that wrong and unreason have no claim to infinite power; and that even were the whole sphere of the knowable proved to be ruled by them, still true loyalty of soul, rather than obey, would submit to their apparently hopeless curse, in the irrepressible consciousness that there is a larger heaven, and a grander reign beyond. In a word, we insist that the vital essence of faith, though like every mental and moral affection impossible of realization in abstract simplicity, lies not in any form of opinion which may clothe it, but in the energy of a voluntary devotion to the best ideal known.

Such a notion of faith is manifestly consistent with every ordinary application of the word, except that

* Mill's "Examination of Hamilton," p. 103.

arbitrary theological usage, which makes it equivalent to special religious opinions. For when we speak of keeping faith with one another, we mean that we are loyal to the trust which we repose in each other. When in the gospel we find "the weightier matters of the law" reckoned as "judgment, mercy, and faith," the context assures us that not theological belief but loyalty of soul is meant. And when we speak of a man's faith in the divine government of the world, we do not refer to any special theory he may have about the mode of that government, but rather to the constancy and courage with which he acts out his predisposition to recognize the imperial supremacy of right over wrong. The New Testament usage, no doubt, enables us to understand how the technical theological application arose. But St. Paul's language about Abraham, already referred to, and the whole chap. xi. of Hebrews, would go to show that the really precious element in the primitive Christian idea of faith was just a loyalty to the better instincts aroused by any manifestly divine message. That message might be conveyed by sight, or by sound, or by inward vision, by witnessed miracle, or credible report. But it was not the sight, nor yet assent to reported sight, which constituted faith; it was obedience to those better thoughts which the miracle or message aroused. Certainly the two elements, of intellectual assent to the evidence of sight, and of loyalty to the predispositions which sight awakens, are often and

very naturally mixed up together in the New Testament. And so St. Paul makes a hearty assent to the report of Christ's resurrection equivalent to saving faith.* But a study of the tenor of his writings shows that, in this passage, he must have imparted into that act of intellectual assent the whole impassioned energy of loyalty and love with which such an assent was in his own experience indissolubly associated. And it was the latter element, not the former, which gave to this assent the preciousness of faith.†

It is not proposed in this essay to trace out all the relations of faith and opinion. Such a subject would furnish materials for a lengthy treatise. Sufficient is accomplished here if we have made good the position which we assumed at starting, that faith and sight, so far from being mutually exclusive contraries, are never separate, and are absolutely essential the one to the other. Predisposition is never wakened but by sight; and sight is meaningless save as predisposition re-acts upon it. In the next essay we shall try to show what is the bearing of such a position on the religious perplexities of the time.

It is enough to observe in conclusion here that, it

* Romans x. 9.

† This instance shows in what sense a miracle, whether actually witnessed or believed on evidence, might appeal to faith. The miracle itself is indeed in no sense a legitimate object of faith; but as an object of sight it might awaken predispositions which, being loyally followed by the will, may be supposed to result in a higher spiritual life.

our view of the relations of faith and sight be just, we do grievous wrong to the former when we attribute its keen winged force to the dull credulity which believes the greatest wonders on the least evidence. And equally do we mistake its nature when we confound it with the judicial mind which weighs probabilities and decides for the descending scale. For events, whether present or past, appeal to sight, not to faith; and yet sight can do nothing with them without appealing to faith for help. For faith is voluntary loyalty to the predispositions which have the authority or sanctity of a mystic origin in the very roots of our being. Thus sight gives us colour and form; faith alone can give us an outer world. Sight gives us recurrent phenomena; faith alone forms them into the Cosmos of eternal order. So sight, our own or that of others, presents us with words, and deeds, and linked events of history eloquent with divine purpose; but it is faith only that catches the purpose, and finds in it "the true God and eternal life." Not the man then who most readily credits the stories of the past, but the man who most courageously acts out the lessons of real events is the true type of faith. Not the man who most confidently asserts the miracles of Christ is necessarily the most loyal soul; but rather he who, seeing the vision of Christ as it dominates the past two thousand years, most boldly acts out the love of truth, and the consciousness of an omnipresent God, which the vision awakens in the heart.

IV.

THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF RELIGION.

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It is related of a deservedly famous nonconformist preacher, that an admiring hearer, in praising his pastor to a gentleman credited with latitudinarian opinions, said "Our minister is very liberal, sir; very free indeed,—*except, of course, in fundamentals.*" What the worthy deacon—for such I believe he was—included in his list of "fundamentals" I do not know; nor for our present purpose is it of any import. But in treating them as of course excluded from any free handling, he unconsciously touched on a very critical and even vital issue, which the present, or perhaps rather the coming, age is bound to work out to the end. And that issue is the question how far religion in the sense of spiritual life, or, as it has been called, "saving faith" is dependent upon the stability and certainty of any particular opinions. The thought which that good man a little awkwardly expressed was of course something like this;—there are some

opinions which are matters of indifference, such as the significance of the imprecatory psalms, or of the Song of Solomon; and on such matters it is a *virtue* to think freely: but there are also ideas essential to the faith, such as the infallible authority of the Scriptures, or the doctrine of the Trinity; and on these it is a *vice* to think freely. This is merely an expression in plain words of an attitude of mind very common at the present day, but which has none of the conditions of equilibrium or permanence except one—if it be one—and that is arbitrary wilfulness. For it involves the necessity for drawing a line which shall separate essential opinions on the one hand from non-essential opinions on the other: a line which in practice it is found impossible to keep permanent or clear. For instance, a man who at one period of his life draws that imaginary line at the doctrine of justification by faith, may afterwards remove it to some special form of opinion on the divinity of Christ. But if, when his idea of standing or falling faith is at this point, he should be asked whether in his view Unitarians have any chance of salvation, he will almost certainly reply that he hopes so; and that for his part he rather thinks they will. At the same time the admission only shows how obscure and unsatisfactory even to himself is the line that he has drawn to mark off the doctrines essential to salvation. For, as he strongly holds that "without faith it is impossible to please God," he must believe that his Unitarian friends have

in some way or other this saving faith, although they deny what, according to his rule, is an essential element in it. Men of ordinary intelligence, whose views are gradually enlarged, not by the logical development of any recognized principle, but by the practical necessities of social life,* do not care to ask themselves what is involved in their charitable admissions. But there are others who want to know whither such admissions are taking them, and how far this unlimited latitudinarianism of charity is reconcileable with the retention of Christianity in any form. Candour will not allow such men to ignore the fact that the Gospel, if it is to be judged by its original documents, has a reverse side. For if it is a message of salvation in one aspect, it is certainly a message of condemnation in another. Nor is this in the least surprising in a religion which insists with divine authority on the need of moral reformation. But that, which excites uneasiness and repugnance in the judicial severity of Christianity, is the undeniable fact that, in the New Testament, condemnation is denounced against no sin more commonly or more unrelentingly than against that of unbelief. And nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the amiable platitudes with which some writers, enveloped

* In some circles of society there may still survive here and there an interesting specimen of the fine, old-fashioned sectaries who would laugh, joke, and exchange piquant anecdotes with unbelievers whose speedy consignment to a horrible fate was a matter of devout faith. But they are surely dying out.

in a roseate mist of sentiment that obscures stern facts whether past or present, enlarge upon the tenderness of the Gospel towards those "who follow not with us," while they conveniently forget the patent truth that from the beginning to the end of the Christian Scriptures, belief is associated with salvation, and unbelief with its opposite.* The first expedient therefore of more candid doubters is to insist that the amount of intellectual belief necessary to salvation is strictly confined to a very few essential doctrines. Then follows an earnest effort, comparatively easy at first, but always more painful as the process of compression proceeds, to reduce the "fundamentals" of religion to the lowest possible denomination. And if the associations were not so solemn, there would be something ludicrous in the thought that multitudes at the present day are asking themselves "What is the smallest amount of dogma that I can hold with safety to my soul, or at least consistently with a retention of the Christian name?" Such a condition of things is surely a *reductio ad absurdum* of the notions usually entertained concerning the place of opinion in religion.

But farther, whatever distinction be drawn between fundamental and comparatively indifferent doctrines;

* Compare 1 Cor. i. 18; 2 Cor. ii. 16; iv. 3; Gal. i. 8, 9. It is perfectly certain that St. Paul had a mind and heart incapable of mere sectarian narrowness or intolerance; and with him the moral element in faith was supreme. But still it cannot be denied that he treated the rejection of his main doctrines as morally sinful.

or however small be the compass within which the former are reduced; still, on the ordinary notion of religious faith, some propositions are left such as are necessarily dependent on historical evidence or logical proof, but belief of which is required, as a condition of salvation, from people who have no understanding of either. There are thousands of young men whose intellects are just sufficiently awakened to feel that opinions received only by tradition can hardly be called personal opinions at all. They are exhorted from many a pulpit to be "fully persuaded in their own minds;" they are told they should be able "to give to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them." Yet many of the questions, upon which they are expected to be fully persuaded, depend on issues of historical criticism, about which they are quite incompetent to form any satisfactory or manifestly final opinion. Current opinions, for instance, about the Person and the work of Christ are absolutely dependent for their support on the authenticity of the gospels as commonly received. When, therefore, the prevalence of controversy on this latter subject forces on a young man of ordinary education the conviction that the authenticity of the sacred narratives is at all events not quite indisputable, it is inevitable that some modification must be made in his certainty concerning the doctrines involved. It is of no use to urge that on such matters he should be satisfied with the reasoning of the best critics, just as he is content to adopt the views of

Grote or Niebuhr on Greek or Roman History. For first, he is called upon to decide who are the best critics; and next, there is no question of salvation or perdition, or, to put it more mildly, of religion or irreligion involved in his opinions about the character of Cleon, or on the nature of the inspiration derived by Numa from Egeria. In such matters as these a very slight preponderance of probability is sufficient to determine opinion; and opinion so formed may be held with perfect contentment, even where it is suspected, that farther light on the subject might altogether change its character. But where present spiritual life, nay, even eternal blessedness, is thought to be dependent on the formation and retention of a right opinion, the case is very different. In such a case it is surely impossible to rest content, unless the bases of belief are felt to be absolutely impregnable. We receive little comfort in general from the assurance that faith is not the same thing as theological opinion. For those who give us this assurance always assume that some theological opinions are necessarily involved in faith, and that without them faith perishes. But this leaves unassuaged the old aching desire to know what these opinions are, and on what impregnable grounds they rest.

It is common to advise men of doubtful minds to hold their childhood's faith until they know something better, and to depend for present evidence upon their practical experience of the moral power exerted

by their earlier religious views. There is perhaps no fault to be found with such advice properly interpreted; except this,—that it is totally inconsistent with the notion that any opinion whatever can be necessary to salvation, or indeed to the "faith which worketh by love." For, to say nothing of its equal applicability to doubting and ignorant Mahommedans or Buddhists, to whom we may well suppose their religion to have been at least the best moral influence they have known; the assumption, by way of hypothesis, that a certain religion is true, is not like assuming the correctness of a mathematical quantity for purposes of calculation. In the latter case no process of reckoning is in the least affected by the uncertainty of the hypothetical quantity. Addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division can be as surely carried on with a quantity the value of which is acknowledged to be doubtful, as with one which is exactly known. Not so with the moral and spiritual activities of life. Here a suspicion of unreality in the actuating motive must necessarily weaken every spiritual function arising out of it. But if "justifying faith" involves any element of opinion, this latter must be the belief that some statement of doctrine or of historical fact is absolutely, or at any rate, substantially true. What sort of energy, then, or warmth or zeal, can there be in a faith which is only an experimental assumption? Or how can I, "in the inmost parts," regard as true that which the unsilenced whisper of

reason assures me is utterly uncertain? I can *act* as if it were true: that is, I can frequent the assemblies and ceremonies of the Church with an outward show of devotion: I can utter words of prayer while I doubt whether there is any heavenly ear to listen: I can imagine the gratitude which ought to be shown, on the supposition that a great sacrifice has been made for me, even if to me this should seem only the one poetic dream amidst the dreariness of a defunct theology,—the one beautiful bow in the clouds that have drowned a world: I can lend the influence of example and liberality to Church action, which, if its basis were only sound, would seem the very energy of God's life in the later phases of creation. Nor need there be any hypocrisy in all this while my mind is in suspense. But meantime, if the faith that justifies and saves is in any sense, or to any degree, dependent on certainty of opinion, I am unjustified, unsaved, and beyond the pale of redemption. And in the event of my death without a change, even the most charitable true believers can hardly adjudge me to instant blessedness, without some confusion or even stultification of their ideas about redemption by faith.

In reference to this subject, one notorious sign of the times is the comparative ill odour into which creeds have fallen, not only amongst the sceptically inclined, but also amongst those, if such there are, who never had a doubt in their lives. The faith of this generation in Christ as Saviour and Lord is on the

whole not less strong, while it is in some respects nobler and more spiritual, than the faith which animated our fathers three hundred years ago. But at that time it was the fashion to draw out expressions of this faith in the form of creeds which contained many doctrines, all urged as of equal authority, and with the same dogmatic distinctness. Take for example the articles of the Anglican Church, or as at once more nobly and more terribly significant of former Protestant feeling in Great Britain, the Westminster Confession. Those creeds were once regarded as of the most solemn and weighty importance for the preservation of true religion. Yet, to say the least, they have fallen into desuetude now.* And why? Because practically it is being discovered that the most earnest piety is quite compatible with the denial of various articles contained therein. Or, in other words, they confound faith and opinion, a confusion of which in these times we are growing more and more impatient.

The same tendency is seen in the rapid enlargement of the conditions of church communion. Of this the Anglican Establishment does not afford so apposite an illustration as the Nonconformist Churches outside of it. For the legal conditions under which the Estab-

* In England, many nonconformist places of worship contain the Westminster Confession in their trust-deeds. But I know by experience that the assumption of office by the minister may be precede l, not by a signature of the creed, but by an express repudiation of it.

lishment exists have brought ecclesiastical discipline to a dead lock. And the practical absence of any conditions whatever of communion is not so much the result of any intelligent latitudinarianism, but rather of the indifference of the ultimate law-makers, the parliamentary electors, who have ceased to take any interest in national Church politics except in regard to the question of disestablishment. The liberty which is boasted by the "Broad Church" party, as the glory of their legal position, may be regarded from the unbelievers' point of view as triumphant evidence of popular indifference. And however this may be, it seems that a freedom, which results not from the direct influence of popular religious life, but from the powerlessness of congregations and Church courts, can hardly be reckoned, except very indirectly, as any indication of widespread intelligent conviction.. I regard the case of the nonconformist communities as more in point, because they are perfectly at liberty to be as narrow as they please. Their churches exist only by the co-operation of individual zeal. They can make what terms of communion they like. They can alter them at their pleasure. And if, while there is no appearance of any decay of religious life, there is generally speaking a growing latitudinarianism in their terms of communion, they afford (perhaps without knowing it) proof demonstrative that a growing realization of the distinction between faith and opinion is one of the most striking characteristics of the Christian conscious-

ness of the times. That there is a marked progress in this respect, any one who thinks the history of Nonconformity worthy of the slightest attention can easily satisfy himself.

Hardly fifty years ago the members of the same communion amongst nonconformists * were expected to exhibit an almost entire uniformity in their theological opinions. Substantially only one opinion was permitted on the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. All the points of Calvinism were considered to be binding on every candidate for admission to "the Church;" and the whole system of opinion distinctive of the communion was regarded as vitally connected with "saving faith." But every one knows, or at least every one who cares may know, that the case is widely different now. Certainly people of the most varied views on the nature and extent of inspiration readily unite together in one communion. And within the limits of the denominations which formerly were exclusively Calvinistic we can now find all modifications of doctrine, from high Calvinism † to

* It may be thought that the Unitarians are forgotten, but this is not the case. Their means for maintaining uniformity are different from those of other denominations; but they have been no less strenuously used.

† A curious illustration of the graduated condition of modern Calvinism once fell within the experience of a nonconformist theological student, sent out from his college to preach at a village chapel. A young man who came to meet him at the railway

what used to be called with an ill-deserved emphasis of contempt "rank Arminianism." It is true that these denominations are for the most part very jealous of any freedom in dealing with doctrines which they consider *fundamental.* And the name, "Unitarian" as an offensive weapon serves very much the same purpose as the epithet "Arminian" in the last generation. But there is hardly the same confidence in using it. The position may be illogical, but it is significant. It is not to be explained by vague phrases about the growth of liberality. For the question naturally arises, how is it that earnestly religious people feel that they have any right to be liberal where their fathers were so stern? They are not less zealous and eager, perhaps not less intolerant, where they suppose the interests of vital godliness to be concerned, than their most puritanic ancestors. And how is it then that on some questions they are so much more indifferent? The only answer is that they have driven farther than their predecessors the distinction between faith and opinion.

Another illustration of the same tendency is the quiet manner in which questions between science and scripture are settled, or contentedly left unsettled.

station was very curious to know the precise altitude of doctrine which might be expected by the congregation on the Sunday, and by way of emphasizing the importance of the subject, he said to the student, "Yo' seen sir, some on 'em likes it high, and some on 'em likes it low; I likes it middlin' high myse'n."

Why is it that geological deductions and speculations, unless perhaps when they hint at Darwinism, now excite no alarm? Most people who know anything about it are ready to acknowledge that, so far at least, whatever may be their hopes for the future, no satisfactory method has ever been suggested for reconciling the early history of Genesis with established facts. But in these times there are very few whose faith is at all disturbed by the acknowledgment. How can this be explained? They hold opinions directly contrary to the manifest meaning of the details of the Mosaic story. True, they may profess to hope that some inconceivable mode of interpretation will hereafter, with sweet violence, woo the sacred words to say the very opposite of what they seem to say. But meantime such people hold their opinions on the earth's story independently of the Bible, nay, in the teeth of the only interpretation they dare put upon the Bible. And if they feel no uneasiness, it must be because in their inner consciousness there is far more recognition of the true relations of faith and opinion than they would like to acknowledge in words. Their faith clings to the creative Majesty which shines from the pages of Genesis; but as to the opinions accidentally associated therewith through the traditional Mosaic cosmogony, these are quietly dropped.

The same thing is true, though perhaps in a less degree, in reference to the opinions which orthodox theology seems to imply as to the time of man's appear-

ance on the earth, and the dealing of God's providence with our first progenitors. It might have been supposed that the faith usually associated with evangelical opinions would find it impossible to survive the shock occasioned by the sublimation of the alleged historical fall of man into an imaginative myth, or an idealized summary of human probation. The proof that man existed ages before the earliest date which it is possible to assign to Adam, is felt to throw the whole historical system of evangelical opinion out of gear. Nor can any laboured theories about the place of pre-Adamite man in creation and grace, restore the convenient compactness with which history was formerly arranged for purposes of theology. Here, again, there are those who hope with a fond steadfastness almost pathetic, that some way will be found of bringing Adam back from the ideal world to a material garden, and to actual, though apparently impossible, rivers. But meantime the insuperable difficulty of taking up his predecessors into the view of history which he represents, and an inevitable revulsion from the thought of extruding them from the human history to which they so plainly belong, have force enough to dislocate the whole system of opinion previously held. And if a man in such circumstances retains, as so many do, his cherished evangelical faith, he is a fresh illustration of the variable relations which a fixed faith may bear towards changeful opinions.

Nor is it only by scientific or logical processes that

opinions are thus detached from faith. The moral feelings which faith has educated often outgrow beliefs on which her authority has seemed to insist. The savage massacres of men, women, and children, recorded in the book of Joshua, and honoured by tradition as a sacred work inspired by the Word of God, are a burden to the hearts and consciences of the most fervent believers in Him who said, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Such records are usually treated as the proper object of faith, because the authority of God is expressly quoted for the terrible deeds described. And the difficulty of reconciling them with divine goodness has even been regarded as a salutary exercise of faith. Yet in the case of the sons of Rizpah, who were cruelly slain for a crime in which they had no share, good Dr. Adam Clarke felt the exercise to be too hard; and he cut the knot by denouncing the passage as an interpolation. Such a mode of procedure, adopted without the slightest manuscript authority, or a single really critical reason, he considered to be perfectly consistent with his reverence for the Bible, and his faith in the Christian revelation. But in doing so, he raised an issue between faith and opinions about the Bible, which cannot in these days be dropped, as he dropped it, with a complacent assurance, that "still the great foundation of God standeth sure, and is sufficiently attested by his own broad seal of consistency, truth, and holiness."*

* Clarke's Commentary on 2 Sam. xxi.

This is in effect to say, "I have a strong faith in the religion of the Bible; but my feelings and my conscience assure me that this particular passage is corrupt." What if another man shall say, "my critical inquiries show me that the passage is as genuine as any other; but my feelings and my conscience assure me that it is low in moral tone, and false where it refers to God"? Is the former opinion only to be considered consistent with Christian faith, and the latter as a proof of infidelity? If so, it can only be because the Christian faith is thought to be inextricably bound up with a particular opinion as to the infallibility of the Bible, not as the Book exists at the present day—for that is denied in either case—but as it existed at some former time in a purer form, now entirely irrecoverable. There are really many who do in their hearts fear, that if the infallibility of this once existent but now vanished Bible be given up, there is an end to Christianity. Surely it would be well to look this question in the face. And it is strange that so many excellent people, of good general intelligence, fearless in politics and strong on the vital power of moral principle, persist in shirking the issue as they do. The real reason probably is this, that the issue is one which widens out until it embraces the question, whether any opinion whatever is absolutely essential to faith.

But the pressure of this confusion as to the relations of faith and opinion, is felt far more acutely at the

present time, in regard to questions of New Testament history. As a crucial instance, let us take the crowning event in gospel story, the resurrection of Christ. After the death of Chevalier Bunsen, a somewhat sharp controversy was held as to his opinions on this subject. On the one hand it was contended that he had held only a spiritual or visionary resurrection, and on the other it was urged that he had maintained a sound belief in a literal resurrection of the Lord's earthly body. But the point on which I would fix attention is this, that the controversy was conducted with a warmth which seemed to imply that the illustrious scholar's moral character was in question. The one side appeared to feel that they were making a damaging accusation; and the other that they were defending him not from a misinterpretation, but from a slander. Such a case necessarily leads us to ask, what is the relation between justifying faith and opinions as to the nature of the resurrection? The grandeur of the effects produced by the event,—whatever its real character may have been,—the comfort it has given, and the light which it has been felt to shed on the mystery of human life, give the reappearance of Christ to his disciples after his death an altogether exceptional importance. Without it, to most minds, succeeding Christian history is wholly unaccountable. But there are those who think otherwise; and if ordinary views on the connection of faith and opinion are valid, Christian believers have only two modes of regarding such men.

Either their opinion is dishonest; or we must condemn them for a conscientious conclusion.

I know that most of us endeavour to avoid both horns of the dilemma. In a confused sort of way we impute to them a mental condition which is both acute and blind, and a moral state of sincerity and insincerity equally intermingled. We reflect that "the heart is deceitful above all things;" we remember that there is no deception more complete than self-deception; and we complacently illustrate our argument by examples of impostors who have come to have a genuine belief in themselves. Without doubt there have been instances of abnormal mental or moral states, which we can only picture to ourselves in some such confused way. The greatest liar I ever knew had a face so meek and innocent, and met the gaze of scrutiny with eyes so calm, that I could not help thinking he had a "conscience void of offence." But then in such cases we generally feel that there is some morbid element in the constitution. There is some obscure disease analogous to kleptomania, some latent madness not uncommonly associated with extraordinary powers. But surely, unless we have fallen into such a condition ourselves, we cannot sincerely attempt to account in such a fashion for the opinions of all who deny the historical reality of the resurrection. There are men of thoroughly healthy nature, of at least fair critical judgment, and of unimpeachable integrity, who, after earnest investigation, come to a

conclusion opposite to our own. In such cases charitable confusion will not serve our purpose, and—always supposing the ordinary hypothesis as to the relation of faith and opinion to hold good—we must inevitably accept one alternative or the other; either we must impute to them some insincerity, or we must condemn them for an honest opinion.

But, to look at the question from another point of view, can it be maintained that the evidence which we have to offer in favour of our own opinion about this great event is such as to force upon us any unnatural or strained hypothesis to account for the unbelief of others? When we bear in mind the fragmentary character of the historical records handed down to us, and the apparent discrepancies which have exercised the ingenuity of harmonists—when we consider that the synoptic narratives, which generally agree very fairly, present in their testimony to the resurrection most important differences, while one of them, that of St. Mark, appears originally to have recorded nothing more than the discovery of the deserted tomb,—when it is added that the Fourth Gospel gives an almost entirely new selection of appearances, while St. Paul's testimony differs from all alike—surely it cannot be contended that the historical evidence is such as to make discussion impossible. Of course each intelligent believer has his own way of meeting these difficulties. But where is the man, I would not say so ignorant of historical criticism, but so deficient in common sense,

as to deny that there are any difficulties at all? One may remind himself that the Apostles had no notion of preparing affidavits to serve as legal evidence after their death. Another believer will be quite satisfied to think that the discrepancies were left, as an exercise of faith, by the Divine Spirit who dictated the narratives. One may reflect that notes of oral teaching, such as he takes the synoptic gospels to be, are not likely to be exhaustive or precisely accurate in their record of events; and remembering how the excitement of unusual occurrences confuses observation and memory, he may think it no great marvel that these gospels should be more divergent here than anywhere else. Another believer will insist that a superintending inspiration has made the various narratives supplementary one to another. Similarly all have their own methods of accounting for the additional accounts contained in the Fourth Gospel and in 1 Cor. xv. But all think there is something to be accounted for; all feel there are difficulties to be met. Nor can it be too bold to affirm that were these scanty records the sole material for the formation of opinion, the case for the affirmative would, to say the least, scarcely be very strong. So far, then, as the question is one of original documentary evidence, it can hardly be maintained that disbelief is so unwarrantable as to prove a bias against the truth. But, whether consciously or not, we do most of us rest our belief on quite other grounds. We say that Christian life and history are great facts,

which seem inexplicable apart from the resurrection. Granting the imperfect nature of the New Testament records considered in themselves, yet nothing in all history, sacred or profane, is more clearly established than the fact that the men who had been companions of the Lord in Galilee and Jerusalem did, immediately after his final disappearance from the world, declare that he had risen from the dead, and that they had seen him since his crucifixion. Still further, it is established with equal certainty that this testimony of theirs was accompanied by an outburst of moral regenerative power such as the world has never seen before nor since. This peculiar influence which possessed the souls of the Apostles, and raised them above all ordinary human motives, was not any new philosophy, like Buddha's, nor any sacred wrath against idolatry, like Mohammed's. It was something for the like of which history might be searched in vain—something, the inward experience of which can only be described in the words of St. Paul—"the power of God unto salvation." But one of the most characteristic notes of the experience of this strange spiritual force was its constant and inveterate association with the announcement of the resurrection of the great Teacher. It was the power which God "wrought in Christ when He raised him from the dead;" it was "the power of Christ's resurrection;" to realise it was to "rise with Christ;" and in him the first-fruits, the whole coming race awake to newness of life, as

the whole spring is embodied in the first blade above the ground. More than that, the Life lives yet. God has shined in our hearts too, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And all our noblest thoughts, all our most searching motives, all our keenest emotions are consciously, vitally connected with our recognition of the crucified and risen Christ as "the brightness of God's glory." Now, unless the Apostles did in some real sense see their Lord after his crucifixion and burial, we hold, with St. Paul himself, that it would be impossible to acquit them of false witness, or, in plain words, of deliberate lying; and such is our inveterate and most righteous association of falsehood with impurity, that it is impossible for us to believe the regeneration of the world to have originated in a lie. It is, then, the moral argument, organically bound up in general Church history and actual Christian life, which affects us far more than any inference from a criticism of the original documents considered in themselves.

Still, on a review of all the conflicting evidence, it is impossible to condemn those who think that the whole argument points to a conclusion different from that which is ordinarily assumed by the Church. When it is borne in mind that the one appearance of which alone we have direct and indubitable personal testimony, that to St. Paul, was manifestly visionary * in

* By this word I do not mean unreal. In my own view there need be no doubt that the impression of an outward and visible

character; and when it is remembered how strenuously he insisted that the manifestation of the risen Saviour to him was of precisely the same value as the manifestations to the other disciples; it is, to say the least, unreasonable to charge with wilful blindness all those who believe that the appearance of Christ after his

glorified presence was distinctly made on the brain of St. Paul, and was the result of a really divine inspiration. Whether it should be called miraculous or not is another question. But if, as a divinely-ordered step in the development of a higher religion, St. Paul was made to have such a strong inward realization of Christ's spiritual majesty, that this projected itself in the form of an outward vision, as was the case with Col. Gardiner; what does it matter whether we call it miraculous or not? In the sense of being unusual it *was* miraculous. In the sense of producing an extraordinarily intense apprehension of a divine presence which is never absent, it *was* miraculous. But if it is insisted that no view is satisfactory which does not admit a suspension of known laws of nature, it is the duty of those who thus insist to point out precisely what laws of nature they conceive to have been suspended. Does any one really think it reverent to suppose that a physical frame, so far terrestrial as to be capable of making audible vibrations in atmospheric air, hovered, in defiance of gravitation, in the noon-day sky? Either the phenomena were physical, or they were not. If they were, we ought at least to be able to form a distinct conception of them, and to put it into words. Would it be reverent to conceive the actual body of the Lord poised in the air? But if the phenomena were not physical, there is only one other alternative; they were mental, projected, we may believe, under a really divine impression, from within outwardly, not from without inwardly. It need scarcely be pointed out how inconsistent any physical appearance would be with the representation in the Acts that the personal presence was realized by St. Paul alone, and not by his fellow-travellers.

death was entirely of a spiritual nature. That such a hypothesis has its difficulties is most true. But so has every other. And all that I urge in this place is that where the question at issue, put it how we may, is after all a choice of difficulties, it is scarcely consistent with the claim of our religion to universality, that it should condemn as perverse and irreligious the adoption of all conclusions but one.

There is one way of meeting such perplexities which, as it has been adopted by some of the best and ablest men of our own times, has naturally attracted much attention; and as it is proclaimed with a sort of generous scorn for the misapprehensions of religion betrayed in the above reasoning, has inspired much confidence, especially amongst the young and ardent. This may be called without offence the Broad Church method. It consists in a deprecation of all mere opinion on religious doctrines, and an insistance on self-abasement before the glory of the truth. According to this view it is not any personal belief, mine, yours, or his, which is of consequence; but only that comprehensive truth, of which they are all alike imperfect apprehensions. No doubt there is in such a suggestion a pregnant hint of what will some time be recognised as the very soul of religion. But meanwhile it must be conceded that there is much in what enemies say of this Broad Church method. For there is a vagueness about it which gives us great difficulty in determining what precisely is its interpretation of

the religious life. Perhaps we may be told that the true position is the denial of the possibility of any precise interpretation. Still, if it is not my thoughts about the truth, but the truth itself which is of consequence, one naturally asks what is the relation which is here suggested between the individual soul and the object of its devotion? If there is no sort of relation, our case does not differ from that of beasts; while, if there is such a relation, it must be somehow expressed in consciousness. But that expression is precisely our idea or belief, which may be inadequate indeed, but which is yet the only means whereby the truth can command our loyal submission. And if it is a knowledge of the truth, which constitutes religion, then piety is on this theory, as well as on the other, dependent on correctness of opinion.

The feeling of vague inadequacy which is excited by the "glorious insufficiencies" of Broad Church theology is however converted into dumbfounded amazement when we are pointed to ancient creeds as the grandest symbols of the truth. And no veneration for the great qualities of our teachers can alleviate our bewilderment when we are told, that what we had vainly thought to be contradictions, absurdities, or impossibilities in the ancient documents of the Church, should rather be accepted with thankfulness as a rebuke to our self-opinionativeness, and as a solemn lesson on the inferiority of our narrow conceptions to the infinite comprehensiveness of the truth. Creeds like that

attributed to Saint Athanasius, which bear in every word the stamp of a narrow aim to define the limits of right thought by a lawyer-like exactness of phraseology, are appealed to as a majestic reproof of the substitution of opinion for religion. With the purpose which such great teachers have in view we may feel the profoundest sympathy, because we take that purpose to be the ultimate emancipation of spiritual life from bondage to any opinion whatever. But for the method which they propose to us we may have nothing but a confession, often unaffectedly mournful, of an utter incapacity to comprehend it. The thought which underlies a good deal of Broad Church doctrine on this subject seems to be, that divine truth has shone out impressively but fragmentarily in a number of canonical books and established formulas, all of which, however they may confound our notions of fact or possibility, are to be accepted, not indeed as infallible, but as complementary one of another, and of our own insufficient opinions. Now it may well be that a very genuine humility and a very generous sympathy inspire sentiments such as this. But in the present age that will not exempt them from curious criticism. And we cannot help asking why this broad view should be limited to *canonical* books and *established* formulas? If it only means that what is commended by a wide and concurrent testimony of human experience should be treated with respectful attention, we may admit the force of the observation; while at the

same time we cannot avoid remarking that it is equally applicable to the Koran or the Vedas, and to the formulas of the religions which they represent. If on the other hand it is urged that all utterances of religious experience, and all forms of worship, and all creeds, Christian or heathen, have germs of truth which we should do well to scrutinize, there is a good deal to be said also for even so extreme an assertion. But to winnow the chaff and dust from the grains of truth is surely the work of individual judgment. Or if the Christian books and forms of belief have pre-eminent claims to be a divine revelation, the ground and extent of these claims must manifestly rest on sufficient reasons, of which each mind made the object of appeal is necessarily, under whatever responsibility, the judge. Thus the Broad Church method, of spurning individual opinion in comparison with the glory of the truth, would appear to differ only in vagueness from the common bluntness of sectarianism which connects salvation with the formation of right opinions. Nor does it make any difference if a Divine Person be substituted for the truth, as the object of adoring submission. For here an opinion of startling and portentous import is at once involved. And it cannot be denied that some great and good men, whose disinterested love of truth, or whose high character none but bigots would challenge, have insisted that the attribution of a literally personal (which must mean human) mode of being to the Supreme Majesty is a

daring presumption, analogous, though on a grander scale, and with a better motive, to the treason of the Parisian Mænads, who would not tolerate the distance separating their sovereign from the familiarity which ended in contempt. Now, either here in the insistance on the literal personality of Almighty Power, we have an opinion which is absolutely necessary to religious faith, or else that faith can exist apart from any opinions whatever, except such as are merely the judgments uttered by moral sentiments.

Another device of liberal theology to evade the terrible conclusions involved in ordinary notions of justification by faith, is the interpretation of salvation and perdition, not as permanent states of happiness or misery, but as opposite moral conditions; in one of which the soul realizes eternal verity, and by that contemplation is purified from self-worship; while in the other the soul is wholly involved in temporal accidents, itself the centre of them all. It is often difficult to judge how far the representatives of this school of thought identify that eternal verity with certain great theological opinions. On the one hand their sympathies sometimes appear unlimited by any considerations of belief or unbelief. On the other hand the enormous importance which they attach to venerable formulas and creeds, notably to theological conceptions of the Trinity and the Incarnation, would seem to imply that some of these conceptions are, if not identical with, at any rate the only portal of

everlasting truth. Now, if any such theological opinions are indispensable conditions of that present divine life in which men grasp eternity, the horror of an ever-enduring punishment of false opinion may indeed be eliminated; but it is still difficult to see how the blessings of the highest spiritual life can justly be made dependent upon correctness of opinion. On this view, it would seem that however earnestly a man may aspire after purity and goodness, he cannot know the bliss of eternal life unless he can force his intellect to a possibly repugnant conclusion. It is no consolation for him that to others such a conclusion appears in the highest degree rational. Such a fact is rather an aggravation of his sufferings. For he is not constituted so as to see things as they do. It appears therefore that if he would but "make his judgment blind," all would be well; and because as an honest man he dare not do so, he is excluded from the blessedness vouchsafed to others. It is simply the old incongruity of damnation for opinion over again, only in a more subtle form, that mocks us with the pretence of a solution. Nor is it of any avail to tell us, as indeed we are told by advocates of the older superstition, that false opinions are always dangerous, and in many affairs of life bring some curse after them. This is indeed most true; and is rightly urged as an inducement to make the best use of our intellectual powers. But on the other hand, in regard to all the lower activities of life, it is generally held that the

consolations of religion are always available for those who have done their best and failed. A man who by a well-intended but mistaken transaction loses his fortune, may humbly believe that his aims have been set aside by the grander purposes of God. Nay, even a man who has lost his opportunities by arrogant self-will, may in after humiliation own his punishment to be just, and find some healing by his acquiescence in the righteous government of the world. But here only, in that divine life which is the true "balm of hurt minds," the oil of joy to involuntary griefs, and even the antidote to the sting of sin, involuntary errors of judgment may bring down a curse, than which no greater can be visited on unpardonable sin,—the loss of eternal life. It may indeed be true that God has implanted in the heart certain instincts, which if they be loyally followed, lead each man to the highest life possible for him; it may be true that in every ingenuous heart there are strong predispositions to a reverence for the Majesty half-revealed and half-concealed in creation; it may be true that for want of loyalty to such an inward law many a man too heedlessly wrongs himself, and shuts himself out from the shrine of the universe. But it cannot be for one moment contended that any such inward law points unmistakably to doctrines like that of the Trinity or of the Incarnation. Yet liberal theologians, in their professed contempt for external evidences, often seem to proceed on the assumption that if a man will but

follow the light within, especially as its indications are modified by carefully-placed mirrors of culture, he must needs become a Broad Churchman. If he does not, it is the disloyalty of indifference which has seduced him into pathless wilds; or perversion of vision which has misguided him into the narrowly-walled gardens of the sects. But if, on the other hand, such vague expressions of liberalism when plainly interpreted mean, that salvation in its noblest sense cannot be conditioned on the adoption of any opinion whatever, then here indeed is a clear field, on which we may examine without hindrance the essential nature of religion. But the distinct expression of such a view would scarcely be consistent with the authoritative maintenance of the creeds and articles of the Church.

It may occur to some readers of these pages that in the present state of opinion a good deal of this discussion might well have been spared. The notions with which we have been dealing belong, it may be urged, to a day gone by; and though the words which embodied them may remain, the feelings answering to them are irrevocably dead. That this is so to a very large extent amongst the thinking portion of religious people has been already admitted. But it is not so with the unthinking numbers, who form, of course, a very large majority. And it never will be so with these, until those who think for themselves have the courage to speak according to their thoughts, and not according to the supposed necessities of a time which

really needs nothing so much as plain speaking. And this plain speaking is especially demanded from all who believe that the spirit of Christianity can survive the destruction of the letter. It would be invidious to refer to any special illustrations of the tendency here deplored, nor is it necessary. For almost all spoken and written discourses, professing to be sermons for the times, continue to adopt a style of exhortation which is wholly incongruous with the changed position of the exhorters. Still we find "faith" most inconsistently demanded for historical events, which are no more the proper objects of faith than are the hydrogen flames in the sun. For either those events are proved according to the best canons of historical criticism, or they are not. If they are, common sense, not faith, dictates our belief; while if they are not, credulity, not faith, receives them. To keep up the confusion, these same discourses treat the events of Biblical history as though they were necessarily exempted from ordinary rules of evidence, and needed to be approached quite differently from any other events, with a disposition to believe them even on insufficient evidence. We are pointed to simple saints, and unlettered men of triumphant practical power, who have proved the benefit of believing even without understanding the evidence at all, but simply from the force of spiritual experience; while yet not the slightest attempt is made to show that this spiritual experience necessarily involved the reality of the historical events. The writers or speakers of

these exhortations often do not themselves believe in the infallible accuracy of the accounts from which they derive their knowledge of the events on which they insist. They thus admit the right of private judgment, and do not pretend to draw any line of limitation beyond which that right becomes a wrong. And yet they seem to insist on connecting faith, that "power of an endless life" with historical opinion about events concerning which they themselves do not know where uncertainty ends and certainty begins.

The same confusion is sometimes exhibited where there can be no question as to the wish of the teacher to speak distinctly his whole meaning; when we are told to bear in mind that there is a knowledge by faith as well as a knowledge by observation. In illustration of this remark we may venture to quote from a series of three sermons, preached before the University of Cambridge, the following passage.* "Man would, indeed, be the most absurd of all animals if, while he has strivings and longings after a spiritual world, there were no ascertainable relation between him and that world. The position that there is a knowledge which is of faith as well as a knowledge of the things we see just explains man to himself. *By faith we understand.*" Whether the word knowledge is used in two different senses in this passage, we are not told.

* "Creed, or No Creed." Three Sermons preached before the University of Cambridge in October, 1871, by J. B. Pearson, M.A., Cambridge. Deighton, Bell, & Co., 1871. Cf. p. 53.

Perhaps the author thought that a sufficient distinction is suggested by the different descriptions,—"knowledge which is of faith" and "knowledge of the things we see." But this is a difference in their sources only. The one knowledge springs from faith; the other from observation and comparison. It would have facilitated our understanding of this distinction if the preacher had told us precisely what he meant by faith;* whereas he seems to assume that the notion is equally distinct with that of sight. In the inevitable perplexity which ensues, we are obliged to try whether the difference between the objects of the one knowledge and the other will help us. Now it would appear from the connection, that one object of the knowledge by faith is an *ascertainable* relation between ourselves and the spiritual world. But surely the epithet "ascertainable" suggests intellectual processes of investigation, comparison, and distinction, such as would make the result very much like the other sort of knowledge which we derive from sight. Again we find that in words which must appeal to every heart, however we may be dissatisfied with their logic, our instructor describes it as a function of faith "to accept a creed which tells of a divine incarnation of humanity and an atonement of our nature with the divine."†

* In a previous passage (p. 40) it is described as "the highest act of reason in which the varied powers of knowledge and feeling and will blend their several notes," &c. But this is scarcely what we want.

† Page 58.

There is such an earnestness of purpose in this preacher, that it may seem almost cold-hearted to stop and ask precisely what he means. But the necessities of the religious crisis impending are such that no half-criticisms will serve us. What, then, is the "divine incarnation?" If it is anything dependent on the reality of the miraculous conception, it is a matter for strict historical investigation; but that is surely not a function of faith. It is of no use to urge that the conclusions of two differently-disposed men, judging the same evidence, will be coloured by their susceptibilities and desires. We know they will; but that is just what we insist ought not to be. A man has no more right to accept insufficient evidence of the miraculous conception because the doctrine depending on it appears to him beautiful, than he has, without adequate proof, to accept the legend of William Tell as historical, because the story gives such a glow of romantic interest to the emancipation of Switzerland. The fundamental question in each case is, Did the thing happen or did it not? If we have evidence enough to answer in the affirmative, it is, as I have endeavoured to show elsewhere, not a matter for faith at all; it is a fact ascertained by intellectual observation. Whereas, if we have not evidence enough to prove the affirmative, faith can no more supply the lack than it can bridge the abyss between us and the moon. To no purpose is it urged that probability forms an element in such questions, and that this is measured by faith; as when I maintain my absent

friend's honesty, even on doubtful evidence, because I trust him. For this assumes a knowledge of the plans of the Most High, the claim to which would be impious were it not well-intentioned, and condoned by the unthinking sympathies of piety. What an extraordinary circle of reasoning such assumptions establish! Successive generations of mankind are told that God has worked certain wonders for the purpose of revealing His character. They form their ideas of His nature according to the suggestions thus given. And when at last some one asks how we know that these things really happened, the answer is, that the evidence is not quite conclusive, but every one who rightly appreciates the divine character will feel that they are extremely probable.

On the other hand, if the "divine incarnation" is something which does not depend on the reality of the miraculous conception, it is difficult to say what it can mean, unless an extraordinarily glorious suggestion of the divine background of existence by means of a human person. For, to speak of the embodiment in a human shape of a hypostasis of the Infinite Being, is to use words to which avowedly no rational conception is attached, and which are used upon authority in deference to an alleged revelation supported by certain historical credentials. Here we are brought to historical criticism at once. We are bound to decide according to the evidence; and as before, it must be insisted that this is not a function of faith at all, but of intellectual

observation, which, for all moral and spiritual purposes, may be classed with sight. But if the less theological description of the divine incarnation, given above, be deemed sufficient, it is manifest that the sense in which this is accepted, must be entirely dependent on the sufficiency or insufficiency of the evidence to give a really historical picture of Christ. Let the issue be clearly understood. Our argument postulates neither the truth nor the falsehood of the memories and doctrines which are represented by preachers as objects of "the knowledge which is of faith." It only insists that either alternative must be determined by evidential considerations with which faith has no more to do than it has with the multiplication table. "The knowledge which is of faith," turns out to have objects which are not only presented to the intellect, but must be judged entirely by the intellect, before they can possess any validity. But no more can be said concerning the "knowledge of the things we see;" and the alleged contrast appears to be one of those distinctions without a difference which are the cause of endless confusion. The true antithesis between faith and sight we have endeavoured to ascertain in a previous essay; and the application of the ideas adopted there to the confusions here pointed out is obvious. For events certified by the intellect appeal to faith for their ultimate significance, just as much as the external world does, or the regular succession of phenomena. But that significance cannot be formulated by metaphysical theology, nor by

ontological speculations on the person of Christ. It is realised by the excitement of predispositions in loyalty to which we trust, the supreme moral order taking form in our consciences as love and righteousness. But to maintain that this loyalty is unattainable, except on condition of adopting intellectual conclusions, the grounds of which leave room for doubt, is contrary to experience, and scarcely reverential towards the divine government of the world.

It is time to bring to a point this preliminary discussion, in order that we may enter upon the more positive treatment of our subject. From what has been said, it results that if religion is universally possible, not to say universally binding, it must be consistent not only with freedom of thought, but with any possible issue of a conscientious use of that freedom. A universal religion cannot make any creed whatever binding upon us, except that which it does not create, but finds involved in, yet needing evolution from, the constitution of the human mind. Revelation there may be; but in as far as it is dependent upon evidence, it cannot rightfully demand assent as a duty, where two divergent conclusions are honestly possible. Facts of the grandest religious significance there may have been; but the ascertainment of such facts is the work of critical judgment, not of faith. And if their deepest significance is only apprehended by faith, this is a characteristic which they share with all the phases of

creation. But faith there must be too; not the weakness which regards credulity as a virtue, but the loyalty of soul that trusts, even where it cannot trace all their issues, the predispositions which are the re-action of the heart upon the infinite mystery of life.

From this point of view, however intimate may be the connection between faith the persistent energy, and opinion the varying form, of religion, the two must be fundamentally distinct. And though it would be as difficult to imagine faith entirely abstracted from opinion as it would be to conceive animal life apart from some organic form, yet the one ought not any more than the other to be confounded with its various modes of particular expression. Hence the importance of the distinction between faith and sight. For opinion is almost always of the nature of sight, expressing the result of our own observations, or else of the observations of others; while on the other hand faith is the energy of a loyalty to certain predispositions which we recognise more or less distinctly as laws of our being. There are indeed instances—such as that of our belief in an external world, or our assertion of a causation beyond mere succession,—in which faith does undoubtedly generate opinion. But this is only an illustration of that sort of polar antithesis according to which faith and sight mutually create one another. For these opinions just mentioned are evidently the legitimate projection of inherent predisposition on the field of outward observation. And if it should be

alleged that this principle is equally applicable to those opinions about historical revelation, which are here maintained to belong to sight rather than to faith, the answer is obvious; for faith does not create its object, neither does it supply the place of eyes, or ears, or reason. What faith does is simply to give, in loyal obedience to an inward law, a certain interpretation or subjective form to outward objects perceived by appropriate faculties. But faith cannot supply the gaps of historical evidence; no more than it can give increased power to a defective telescope or microscope. And if on the other hand the historical evidence is complete, it needs no confirmation from faith. Yet, if it is insisted farther that what is wanted is not confirmation, but interpretation; the answer is that faith will deal with such events precisely as it deals with all the myriad objects which under its intuitions grow to the vision of a divinely-ordered world. Faith will not have one rule of interpretation for events in Palestine, and another for events in Greece. One old world memory may indeed be more suggestive than another to the predispositions which faith obeys. But those predispositions lead us, as we have seen, rather to everlasting order than to miracle; rather to a universal and eternal manifestation of God than to any exceptional divine communications. That strange events have happened, pregnant with spiritual significance, and seeming to mankind like a special effort on the part of God to break through the barriers of sense, it

would be rather folly than arrogance to deny. But the reality of such events it is no part of faith's prerogative to establish. That must depend upon the evidence which they can present to sight.

In the pages which here follow, it will be my object to suggest an idea of religion such as is not only consonant with the view already taken of faith, but is also consistent with that principle of continuous development, which is more and more recognised as in some sense the key to the whole progress of creation and of man. To all who estimate rightly the significance of those signs of the times mentioned above, no definition of religion can be satisfactory unless it surrenders all distinction between essential and non-essential dogmas; unless in fact it is capable of embracing within its scope every conceivable opinion that can by any possibility be conscientiously held. Nor must this condition of conscientiousness be narrowly interpreted, as though, for instance, I covertly implied the exclusion of so-called atheistic opinions from an occasional though certainly paradoxical connection with religious feeling. For what is usually meant by atheism is not necessarily any denial of the measureless life that throbs at the heart of the world; but simply the rejection of this or the other theism which is proposed for acceptance. If, amongst a tribe of Calibans, the only god proclaimed were Setebos; any one who denied him might well consider himself an atheist; and yet the reason for his atheism might be,

not any want of appreciation for the wonder of the world, but a deep feeling that there is far more in existence than such a theism can account for. And if some of the tribe should add to the attributes of Setebos those of Jove, still such a recusant might feel that the power manifested in the world was something grander far than could even by imagination be impersonated in such a form. Of such essentially religious atheism we shall hereafter see a remarkable example in Lucretius. Nor is it irrelevant to remind ourselves that a Pagan generation could not conceive the spiritual religion of Christ as anything but atheism. But should it be objected that the ideas now prevalent of the Divine Government of the world leave no excuse for such an anomalous position as that falsely attributed to Socrates, and actually adopted by Lucretius, we may venture to remark that such an objection greatly under-estimates the stupendous vastness of the subject; and fails to make any sufficient allowance for the infinite variety of aspects under which it may appear to different finite minds. However we may account for it, there can be little doubt that there are at the present day those who are atheists only in this sense, that they deny every particular theism on the ground that it is an inadequate expression of the mystery of being. And that can be no profound religion which is without any sympathy for a position like this. Yet there is undoubtedly, as I have urged in another essay, a sort of atomic atheism which, intel-

lectually at least, amounts to a denial of either the need or the possibility of religion. If a man can really think that the glory of the universe is explicable on the hypothesis of little indestructible and eternally dancing points of matter, which have no deeper reality within or beyond them; then certainly religion is in that man an incongruity, but it does not follow that he will be wholly destitute of it. For I do not for a moment believe that any man *can* really think any such unthinkable absurdity. He may think that he thinks it; but that is all. What he really means is that there is no farther explanation *possible*, however much it may be needed; and therefore he calls his atoms the ultimate explanation of the world. But that does not hinder him from many a moment of reverie, in which he recognises in the universe some nameless Unity that awes his spirit to a silent worship. It is not the only instance in which inconsistency is salvation.

Now these extreme illustrations of the working of that principle, above enunciated as the outcome of the religious difficulties of the time, ought to help us to some positive apprehension of what the essence of religion is. For even the atheist, in the loneliness of that desert from which all bright embodiments of spiritual affections have perished, still feels the mystery and the might of the boundless darkness that oppresses him. The human mind chafes like the sea against all temporary bounds. Every newly-discovered cause

invites speculation into the regions beyond it; and every fresh generalization suggests still grander views of the unity of the world. Nor is it possible to conceive the existence of a race properly human, without some germ of the sense of spiritual mystery which so rapidly widens out into an apprehension of that Infinite "whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference nowhere." But such an apprehension involves the feeling of dependence, subordination, the craving after harmony with that larger Power which is dimly discerned. And it is in this distinctively human apprehension which, while faintly discoverable in the humblest, remains in the highest humanity wholly unresolvable into any forms of the logical understanding, that we must seek the essential nature of religion. Following the suggestions of great teachers,* but carefully avoiding the snare, into which some have fallen, of confounding religion with philosophy on the one hand, or with morality on the other, we may define religion as being in its essential nature an endeavour after a practical expression of man's conscious relation to the Infinite. By our conscious relation to the Infinite, I mean that indefeasible sense of ultimate substance and all-sufficient power, which is the main subject of argument in the essay on the Philosophy of Ignorance. And if the word "Infinite" should be unfortunate in its suggestion of a final effort at metaphysical abstraction, such as is impossible to

* See especially Schleiermacher, "Ueber die Religion."

simple minds, yet it has the advantage of a kind of fluxional significance, expressing the successive removal of limits in the aspiration after that ultimate mystery which is beyond all thought. The simple savage, who wonders at the unseen but mighty wind that streams from unknown realms of power, has already the germ of the feeling which inspires religion. All I ask is that the phrase "conscious relation to the Infinite" may be accepted as including every stage in the development of this consciousness, just as the name of a plant includes the germinating blade as well as the fruit-bearing maturity. This being granted, what constitutes religion is not the intellectual formulation of that consciousness; for this is properly the work of philosophy. But religion aims rather at expression in the language of the heart. And if I use the epithet "practical," it is not because I would confine the idea of religion to deeds of devotion or acts of worship, though these are necessarily included; but because the term seems best to embrace both such manifestations of religion, and also that inward energy which in contemplation yearns after the supreme good. For religious contemplation, though in its highest form it may be passive rather than active, is yet practical in this sense, that it is a willinghood to lose self-will and self-love in the glory of God.

I propose then to show how such an idea of religion is not only applicable to all the forms in which religious life is manifested, however divergent the opinions asso-

ciated therewith, but is also consistent with the development of religion through all its stages of fetishism, symbolic idolatry or nature-worship, and prophetic systems. For these are all the stages that can be distinctly recognised; and even those, if we could examine them closely enough, would probably be found to melt into each other more gradually than is supposed. Only let it be distinctly understood that the reality of a divine impulse is assumed throughout. For if the evolution of religion be a normal phase in the development of mankind, there must be at the root of it that grand and measureless Power which is the inevitable, even if nameless, complement of the conception of evolution. That the reality of my profession will be allowed, I can perhaps scarcely dare to hope; and yet in justice to myself I must profess that it is simply in the interest of the divine life which has been the noblest inspiration of history, that the views of this essay, and of all the others in this volume are advanced. Nor is this a use of language in any non-natural significance. If indeed any champion of a rigid creed does in his inmost soul regard the intellectual acceptance of that creed as *identical with* divine life, then there is no doubt but that the ideas here urged are utterly and fundamentally hostile to his position. But I have never known such a position to be assumed. On the contrary, men of every creed with one consent maintain that, though the belief of certain doctrines is necessary to religion, yet it is not to be identified with religion, because this is

of the heart and not of the head. Religion, they say, is the "love of God shed abroad in the heart;" or it is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" or it is that reconciliation to God which gives a consciousness of a filial relation: in any case it is not a cold intellectual opinion, nor a system of formal ceremonies; but a warm, bright creature of earnest life, praying, praising, mourning, rejoicing; blessing and regenerating the world. Now that is precisely the general idea, the essential significance of which forms the subject of this argument. Certainly any definition of religion, or any view of religious history, which would deny the profound reality of communion with God, the significance and power of prayer, or the sacred fire of evangelic zeal, must necessarily fall far short of the evident demands of fact. All evolution implies a divine Power; but the peculiarity of religious evolution is that it has to do with the dim apprehension of that Power in consciousness, and with the phases of increasing elevation and purity through which this conscious apprehension has passed. With these explanations we may now proceed to maintain and illustrate the comprehensiveness of the definition given above.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has been much blamed by many religious thinkers for making the reconciliation between science and religion to lie in the recognition on both sides that "the Power which the Universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable."* Yet those

* "First Principles."—Cap. ii., p. 46.

who most strenuously object to this suggestion are in the constant habit of quoting, with reverential awe, many words of Scripture which declare the unsearchable mystery of God's nature. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? High as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know?"* Such words as these are in familiar use to rebuke the arrogance of philosophy. But when philosophy learns the lesson, its humility is condemned as wilful blindness. Yet the form of the sentence quoted above from Mr. Spencer, especially as coming from a writer whose every word usually deserves to be weighed, might have suggested that there is more room here for the germs of religion than is commonly supposed, at least by defenders of the faith. That any mere confession of mystery, apart from the effect of that mystery on certain inherent spiritual predispositions, is in itself sufficient to constitute religion, I do not for a moment allow. And it is much to be lamented that many† who approach the problem of the universe from the intellectual side, too often suffer themselves to be so prejudiced by the timid intolerance of ecclesiasticism, that they do not sufficiently weigh the significance of

* Job x. 8.

† I know of no reason for the application of this remark in the case of the writer quoted, whose language is always reverent. I refer, of course, to the school of thought with which his name is usually associated.

the moral power attached to genuine religious emotions. But this ought never to deter us from recognizing the principles which we hold in common with them, though we may have been in the habit of expressing those principles in a more emotional, and therefore perhaps in a less accurate form. Now "the Power which the universe *manifests to us*" must at least be an element in consciousness in such a manner as to keep us constantly aware that the world does not explain itself, and that everything, when we try to lay hold of its inmost reality, loses itself in an infinite exhaustless source for ever prolific in finite life and beauty. In accordance with this, I have elsewhere tried to explain how a true philosophy of ignorance retains, as an indestructible element in a fairly matured human consciousness, an apprehension of something beyond all fragmentary existence, the Absolute Being, at once the only true substance, and the One which constitutes the phenomenal world a Universe. But since mankind are so constituted that in one form or another this sense of an ultimate positive mystery is, whether perceived or not, mixed up in all their thoughts, while it occasionally shows itself with portentous energy; it is inevitable that attempts should be made to give practical expression to the feeling. And in such efforts we have the very first germs of religion.

That this sense of an ultimate mystery as a positive element in life is not impossible to uncultivated races, may be shown by the following extract quoted by Sir

John Lubbock from M. Arbrouseille, a French traveller in Africa. The latter mentions a conversation which he had with a Kaffir, named Sekese, on the subject of the Christian religion:—

"Your tidings," said this uncultivated barbarian, "are what I want, and I was seeking, before I knew you, as you shall hear and judge for yourself. Twelve years ago I went to feed my flocks; the weather was hazy. I sat down upon a rock and asked myself sorrowful questions; yes, sorrowful, because I was unable to answer them. Who has touched the stars with his hands—on what pillars do they rest? I asked myself. The waters never weary, they know no other law than to flow without ceasing from morning till night, and from night till morning; but where do they stop, and who makes them flow thus? The clouds also come and go, and burst in water over the earth. Whence come they—who sends them? The diviners certainly do not give us rain; for how could they do it? and why do not I see them with my own eyes when they go up to heaven to fetch it? I cannot see the wind; but what is it? who brings it, makes it blow and roar, and terrify us? Do I know how the corn sprouts? Yesterday there was not a blade in my field, to-day I returned to the field and found some; who can have given to the earth the wisdom and the power to produce it? Then I buried my head in both my hands."

This pathetic story is surely very true to that essential humanity which rises to thought when we contrast men with the brutes; and it may be said to describe the spiritual origins of all religions. The result, in this instance, does not *seem* to have been more than the sadness of baffled speculation. But in reality it was far more; for the subject of these thoughts was brought to a condition of susceptibility, in which any

message like that of Christianity was welcome to his soul. For what he felt was evidently the longing after some practical realization of his place under Infinite Power. In an earlier and inferior age, when savage life was unstirred by any rumoured wonders of civilization, and when the stage of human development was probably much lower than that which seems so barbarous to us, the same predisposition would manifest itself in a ruder form, with an immediate result in fetishism. A tree amidst whose branches the wind breathed unaccountable sounds, or a serpent, whose mode of progression could not be explained by any analogy to the action of the human limbs, was a form in which the ultimate mystery of existence pressed itself upon the awakening mind. And any actions designed to acknowledge human inferiority to the "inscrutable power" thus apprehended, were an endeavour after a practical expression of a conscious relation to the Infinite. Metaphysical notions indeed could have little place in an age like that, though their germs must have existed, or we should scarcely have the notions now. But though the word "infinite," and that inconceivable totality which it shadows forth to us might be unknown in that primeval time, still the sense of a mystery,—of something unsounded, unmeasured, incomprehensible,—worked on the rude savage very much as the idea of infinity does on us. It is the custom to think of fetishism with unmingled horror, as a sort of devilry made tangible by bestiality

And no doubt, like all religious forms which survive the sense of reality in them, fetishism was corrupted from an expression of awe to a mere blind compliance with slavish and unreasoning fear. The same process has infected the original simplicity of Christianity with the slavishness of soul, which buys masses for departed spirits, and tolerates the sale of Church livings. And however stupendous the distance between the first feeble gropings of the religious sense and its grand development in the contemplations of St. John, it is equally true of both that they are not to be judged by the distortions and corruptions of a later day. The bloody rites, of which a reminiscence still remains here and there in the habit of daubing sacred stones with red paint, cannot be conceived without a shudder. But the association of religious ceremonies with ancient groves, whose solemn shades seemed to infant tribes haunted by some dread divinity, indicates to my mind an originally simple awe which had in it the very essence of religion. The facetious and noble author of the "South Sea Bubbles," in giving his notion of South Sea Island idolatries, suggests that when savages had been impressed by oddly-shaped stones, some shrewd fellow of their tribe would represent that the divinities presiding over them had appeared to him in his sleep, and given him a message which constituted him henceforward a priest. This is not improbable. But before the sacredness of the stones could be established, before the notion of a divinity

could have any meaning, the rude hearts of the tribe, just struggling up from brute-life, must have felt some touch of conscious relation to the inscrutable Power, of which the stones excited dim suggestions in their hearts.

Every fresh stream of religious influence has always been purest at its source. In the present day this will hardly be denied of Buddhism or Mohammedanism; while it is the constant belief of every section of the Church that such was the case with Christianity. But if this is so with all religions concerning the origin of which we have any record, analogy at least would suggest that the very first conceivable germ of the religious sentiment,—which I take to be fetishism,—might in the first stirring of its life be comparatively pure, although we know nothing of that aboriginal form except in a state of base corruption. At any rate, that fetishism did at some period prevail throughout the human race is an opinion which has already much to support it, and which will probably find increasing confirmation from every addition to our knowledge of religious origins. It need not indeed be maintained that every race now existing was within its racial life-time fetishistic; for the first germination of religious sentiment dates no doubt from a period long anterior to the divergent development of mankind into existing races. That man must have been removed far from brute life before he could worship even a serpent or a tree, is most true. But all fresh

evidence on the subject of anthropology tends in one direction; it is ever adding millenniums to our estimate of the time occupied by the growth of humanity before the historic period. It is quite conceivable then that fetishism might have been at one time the universal form of religion, even if the memory of it had entirely perished from the earliest monuments of cultivated races. But as a matter of fact that memory has not perished. It is evidenced by hundreds of portentous forms staring down upon us from ancient temples and tombs; and there is scarcely a sacred rite of which we have any record, that can be wholly accounted for apart from some pre-existing element of fetishism. The serpentine emblems on stone circles; perhaps the stones themselves; the "groves" of Canaanitish idolaters; the Soma of the Persian mythology; the dog-headed or bull-faced deities of Egypt or Assyria, are all probably relics of ancient fetishism. To suppose that an original nature-worship was narrowed down to the adoration of cats and dogs and crocodiles, seems most literally preposterous; for it puts the cart before the horse. Surely the idea, that a simple race, who found mystery in a few strange forms, gradually recognized an unknown power under every aspect of nature, seems far easier of conception than the notion that people, capable of conceiving one all-embracing Life, should have sunk to the veneration of trees and serpents.

In thus conceding the probability of the primeval or

universal spread of fetishism, it may be thought that I am yielding more than is consistent with the view I have undertaken to maintain of the essential nature of religion. But there is at least this consolation, that by granting so much, we touch the bottom of the abyss. For no lower religious origins have ever been suggested, or can even be conceived.* And any definition of religion which, while it is sufficient to describe the grandest spiritual contemplations, is also applicable to the lowest possible form of religious sentiment, cannot well be affected by any future discoveries. But if it should be retorted that, by making our idea of religion include

* I do not attach much value to the theory that the earliest religion was a worship of ancestors, and originated in dreams of the departed. Offerings of food, or sacrifices of horses, dogs, or slaves at the grave of a hero, are not necessarily any indication of worship, since they are so obviously accounted for by materialistic notions of immortality. Indeed worship, in the sense of self-abasement before some transcendent majesty, never could have originated in this way. The appearance of a relative or acquaintance is familiar; and if the dream or the imagination of that appearance in another state of existence is attended with any feeling of awe, it must be an awe associated with that other state of existence, not with the familiar shape. But such a feeling would certainly imply an impression, already existing, of the mysterious background on which phenomenal existence rests. And for this feeling no origin can be suggested, other than the one stated in the text. That dreams of the departed should have worked themselves into the texture of a growing religion is in the highest degree likely. But it is quite inconceivable that such dreams should account for the worship of a black stone; and no theory of religion is complete which does not explain phenomena such as this.

the one extreme, we necessarily sacrifice the possibility of including the other, I reply, that the objection arises from an insufficient appreciation of the elasticity of the definition, and of its retention, under all applications, of precisely that which all religionists alike most prize in their own devotional forms. For what is it that a Wesley or a Keble counts so precious in the faith that he professes? One may say it is its power to save the soul, and the other that it is the access which it gives to sacraments of regeneration. But if the former were pressed for the meaning of salvation, he would not be content to define it as deliverance from hell; he would say its essence is reconciliation to God. And if the other were urged to say why he counts so precious the sacraments of regeneration, he would account for his devotion to those forms, not by any unintelligent obedience to an authoritative tradition or command, but by his aspiration after the divine life which eternally flourishes in the City of God. But under this farther explanation, each would accept the faith of the other, or at least the spirit which animates it. And if then we inquire for ourselves, what is that one thought which makes reconciliation to God and the inheritance of a heavenly kingdom parallel and convertible expressions, we find that it is a sense of relationship to an infinite sovereignty, and a desire to give to this relationship some practical form. It may, indeed, be said that by an "infinite sovereignty," both Wesleyans and Anglicans would agree in meaning something much

more distinct to their own thoughts than anything necessarily suggested by so vague a phrase as the Infinite. They mean a Personal Sovereign, who has been revealed in certain historical events and authoritative utterances; and they would decline to recognise as religion anything which did not imply a substantial agreement on such points. But this is only to open again the endless maze of controversy on the connection of faith and opinion. We have already seen how hopeless that question is, on the hypothesis that any disputable opinions are necessary to faith; and I am not going to recur to it now. The opinions to which we have referred may be quite true, and there is certainly more in them than is usually allowed by agnostic philosophers. But that does not in the least affect our position here. For, however much the Wesleyans or Anglicans may prize the particular forms under which they conceive an infinite sovereignty, their very position as religionists implies, that what they care for most is not so much intellectual consent to their belief, as the attitude of loyal obedience which it begets. This latter then, not the former, is the essence of their religion; and it amounts in effect to a practical expression of their conscious relation to the Infinite. The question whether, and to what extent, the one element is separable from the other, is one which doubtless needs a more thorough discussion than we have given to it yet. But the one point upon which I now insist is, that the idea of religion, as an endeavour after a

practical expression of our conscious relation to the Infinite, does include the inmost essence of the most earnest forms of Christianity.

Any endeavour to show that the definition equally includes the humble beginnings of religious history labours inevitably under considerable difficulty, owing to the great obscurity of the subject. It is impossible to accept the degrading rites of existing savage tribes as a sufficient exemplification of original fetishism. For what we want to catch is not a form, but a spirit; and that is necessarily evanescent, leaving an unmeaning symbol behind it. For the illustration of the manners, customs, dwellings, and implements of prehistoric man, existing barbarism may furnish ample resources; because the figures of a dance, the form of a house, the shape of a hatchet may be repeated with monotonous imitativeness from age to age; just as the cells which build up bodily tissues from birth to death continually repeat their predecessors. But our observation of these cells gives us no insight into the vital activity which first developed the differentiation of tissues. The savage's mechanical reproduction of a polished stone hatchet precisely like its predecessor gives us no understanding of the original impulse which developed man into a tool-using animal, or of the spirit of enterprize which led to the exchange of chipped flint for polished obsidian. And so the offerings solemnly made to a black stone, or the dances performed around a bunch of feathers help us very

little to understand the impulse which originated fetishism.

The difficulty is all the greater because the mysterious inspiration which animates mankind in the march of progress has not apparently operated equably nor yet constantly; and in its critical phases never repeats itself. By the development of some special gift and the acquisition of superior weapons, some few races have driven out others from their possessions, and established themselves lords of all accessible lands that seemed worth having. Only in outlying districts, of forbidding aspect, and barren in the resources of life, would the older and lower races find a temporary refuge; until a fresh wave from some centre of vigorous life drove others into the same regions and completed their extermination. Thus it happens that the primeval relics found in the quaternary formation seem to suggest an equability of advance over all the world, such as is against all later analogy. The tribes who first fabricated weapons of chipped flint would drive out others who used only unwrought stones or branches broken from trees; and the latter would find an asylum in lands shrouded in forest gloom or bristling with ice. But the races who began to polish their weapons and vary their forms, would, if not by the superiority of the new arms, at least by the greater enterprize and vigour which these suggest, overcome the possessors of chipped flints, and drive them upon their banished brethren, who would then disappear

from the earth. The same fate would, at the hands of the wielders of bronze, drive out the conservatives who adhered to polished stone, and so make chipped flints, over large portions of the earth, a thing of the past. Such a process would account for the universal prevalence of implements of the same or similar forms, which, being thus carried abroad by successive waves of forced emigration, and buried in recent formations, the age of which it is difficult to determine, seem now to give evidence of a consentaneous progress embracing all mankind at once. But such a conclusion is surely as fallacious as it would be for some future antiquary to conclude, from the gun-flints or gun-barrels dug up here and there all over the world, that fire-arms were an invention common to all mankind, and adopted by all races at about the same period. The same argument may be applied to signs which exist of a universal prevalence of fetishism. For that universal prevalence does not at all prove that this lowest form of religion is only the spontaneous and inevitable corruption of human faculties rotting in the darkness of barbarism. It may well be that it dimly records some very ancient and simple but truly spiritual impulse, by which a primeval tribe, or at most some one or two races here and there awoke from a life hardly more than brutal, and by a real regeneration were made sensible of the mystery of existence.

Another fact, to which we have already alluded, ought to be remembered before such a suggestion is hastily con-

demned. Religious progress, according to all analogy, differs from the advance of material improvement, in one respect most important to our argument. For it is at once swifter and slower, marked by grand impulses which we trace to inspiration, with longer or shorter intervals of inaction. Not every day comes a Pythagoras or a Mohammed, a Moses or an Elijah. And the interval between such inspirations has been hitherto almost always marked by a loss of the original spirit, together with a blind conservatism of traditional forms, which, while pretending to resist all change, necessarily favours the most hideous of all changes—corruption. That this has been the case with Brahmanism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, nay, even with Judaism and Christianity, no one will deny. Is it not then possible that the same thing may have been true of Polytheism and even of Fetishism? But this, to the probability of which all analogy points, is the only assumption which we need to enable us to find in Fetishism not only a veritable reminiscence of man's earliest steps in religious progress, but also an illustration, clear from its very simplicity, of the essential nature of religion.

As I have admitted, so spiritual a reverie as that of Sekese, above quoted, is scarcely to be attributed to any of those remote progenitors of our race among whom we must suppose Fetishism to have originated. But if the motive of that reverie, awe-struck wonder and longing, be conceived as roused to action by some single object, it may very well represent at once the

origin of Fetishism, and the awakening of the religious life in man. A mountain, now veiling its head in storm clouds, now scattering light from spires of ice; sending forth rushes of impetuous floods, or hurling avalanches into the valley; might well strike the savage in some meditative mood with awe, which is not far from worship. Even a stone of unusual shape, or of different texture from the surrounding rocks, could not fail to arrest the attention, and excite wonder, which also points towards worship. Such feelings would inevitably dawn in many minds, without taking any form of distinct expression in consciousness. If, then, any man arose with unusual imagination and peculiar susceptibility to the power of mystery, together with the impulse to put his emotions into words, he would find the minds of his tribe like dry tinder to the sparks glimmering in his soul. The mysterious object, which his imagination invested with life, would become the palladium of the tribal home, the sanction of vows, the centre of the loyalty which gave unity and power. No doubt any language which we may use after so immeasurable a lapse of time, and after changes far greater than are easily conceived in the constitution of human nature, must import into our conceptions of that remote period some elements of feeling and thought which would have been impossible then. But making due allowance for that, the evidence which we have of the prevalence of Fetishism, among tribes who had no opportunity of corrupting a more spiritual religion,

leaves little doubt but that some such process as the one suggested must have formed the earliest beginnings of religion. And the first effect of such an experience on creatures, hitherto not far removed from brute life, must have been to quicken the latent germs of moral feeling within them. For whatever foundation there may be for utilitarian doctrines as to the *standard* of morality, the *sanction* which makes that standard binding has always, as a fact of experience, been found in a sense of obligation to some mysterious greatness asserting claims upon our obedience to which we can set no limit. Apart from such a recognition of the mystery of being as is distinctive of man, it may safely be affirmed that the peculiar awe which we associate with the sanctions of moral obligation could have no existence. And the unknown prophets of Fetishism who first called into distinct consciousness, on however limited a scale, that recognition of mystery, did a moral and religious work, which, difficult as it is to estimate it now, must have been a great step in the progress of the race.

According to the hypothesis which is here suggested, the tribe or tribes, amongst whom such a rude religious movement arose, would be favoured in the struggle for existence by the moral energies which were thus awakened. Or that movement would be only one evidence of a superiority which showed itself also in the improvement of weapons and strategy. But wherever such conquering tribes drove out or enslaved

their rivals, there they would establish the religion they brought with them. And as the original objects which suggested it were often of necessity left behind, the want would have to be supplied,—either by phenomena of the new country as nearly similar as could be found; or by objects unsimilar but equally mysterious; or by rude representations of the original fetish, such as perhaps formed the first beginnings of idolatry proper. But, as already said, such a movement never keeps unimpaired the character of its original impulse. Sacred awe too easily degenerates into slavish fear. The worship paid to an object from a sense of its mystery would be continued from mechanical habit when no feeling of mystery remained. And the savage associations of warfare with the slaughter of captured foes at the tombs of slain heroes would introduce into fetishistic ceremonies of worship blood-stained rites, from which in all probability they were originally free. But into such corruptions we need not follow the original idea. For all that is of importance to the present argument is the probability that the original impulse to fetishism was a sense of some mystery, which excited the tendency to worship. And I maintain that this mystery, if even it were associated only with a black stone, was a rift in the low clouds of savage life, through which Infinity looked in.

It is necessary here perhaps to repeat and confirm a profession already made. Nothing can be further from the purpose of this argument than the maintenance of

what is really meant by the purely natural origin of religion. In dealing with such subjects it is confessedly difficult to give an exact meaning to words. And the difficulty is of course pre-eminently great in regard to phrases which embody popular feeling. Such feeling may be very genuine, and may have a perfectly adequate and legitimate cause; while at the same time, from the nature of the case, for a precise appreciation of the real significance of the feeling we require an estimate of spiritual facts, rather than of phrases; and may often be compelled to give the latter an interpretation which the popular mind is slow to recognize. Take for instance the pathetic insistance of the earnestly devout on the need of a "revelation." By this is usually meant some *miraculous* communication from God to man. But if we ask for a definition of a miracle, we get very different answers; some explaining it as an arrest or diversion of the order of nature; others, as the supercession of a lower law by a higher; and others, again, merely regarding it as an event, the causes of which are beyond the range of any investigation possible to contemporary science. It is difficult to see how any of these definitions can be made serviceable to the purpose for which they are given, that is, to enable us to distinguish historical divine communications to man. But under this variety of view we cannot help recognising as a great spiritual fact the one pervading feeling, that the reality of religion stands or falls with the actuality of *some*

communication from God to man. Men may cling to the tradition of a supernatural voice that sounded from a mount burning with fire, and to the narrative of a birth for which no physiological science can account; but it is not these things in themselves that they care for, it is the reality of a divine utterance to the soul of man. They argue, indeed, as though the possibility of any genuine religion were essentially bound up with the actuality of these or similar historical events; but that is only because they do not see how on any other hypothesis the fact of divine teaching can be maintained. Could they be brought to see this, their whole view of history might be changed, without the least injury to the vitality of their faith. The historical reality of St. Peter's episcopacy at Rome, and the fact of a divine commission of universal primacy to the apostle and his successors, seem to the Roman Catholic essential to the validity of the claims which Christianity makes upon his conscience. But the whole importance of these articles of his belief consists in their supposed necessity for the proof of a divine communication to mankind. Yet if he learns to substitute the authority of the Scriptures for the supremacy of the Roman See, he does not in the least degree lose his confidence in the fact of a divine message given to the world. He has only learned that it may be authenticated in a different manner. It may be said that he still keeps what he believes to be an infallible standard of dogmatic truth. But suppose such a man

gradually to be convinced,—in these days no uncommon process,—that the Book is by no means free from error. Experience shows that he may still preserve his reliance on a divine revelation, guaranteed by miraculous events, which he regards as historically trustworthy. He is still sure that God has spoken to man. The only difference is that the records of divine utterance require care and discrimination to be exercised by the "verifying faculty" in himself. And this is the stage which has been reached by a large number of the thoughtful public in our own day. They have given up Church authority; they have given up Biblical infallibility; but they persist in resting their confidence in the reality of divine teaching on the credibility of certain great miraculous events. We have already seen how cruel it seems to make our participation in the blessings of God's teaching dependent on the issue of doubtful historical arguments; and to that point we do not recur. My only object in this digression is to estimate the feeling which prompts the objection, that such a view of the history of religion, as that which I am trying to explain, is inadequate to the satisfaction of the craving for a veritable message from God. This feeling is best expressed by the pathetic words of the Psalmist, "I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me;" and those commandments are identified with a genuine inspiration of mankind by the divine Spirit. Hence in many popular lectures and

treatises the question at issue is said to be this, "whether God has spoken to man or not." The faith which is deeper than all historical beliefs, stronger than all chains of syllogism, passionately asserts that He has; and over against this position, as contradictory to it, the same faith sets the idea of the purely natural origin of religion.

It is in this sense of the latter phrase that I have disclaimed, and do most earnestly deprecate any idea of maintaining the natural origin of religion. For most firmly am I assured that God has spoken to man, nay, is speaking to us each for ever. But there is a sense in which the natural origin of religion may be affirmed without the slightest sympathy for the sort of naturalism which devout minds justly dread. "The heavens declare the glory of God," exclaims the Psalmist, "and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech; and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." And then, with an insight amazing in that early time, he finds in the moral order which claims the inward kingdom of the heart, an analogy to, and a reflection of, the eternal reign of law shining out in the march of sun, moon, and stars. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the command-

ment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Let it be granted that the words here have special reference to Mosaic legislation. Yet the tone of prophetic fervour, and the well-known habit of the devouter Hebrews, who regarded "the testimony of the Lord" as a living word direct to the contemplative soul, justify us in seeing in this psalm the recognition of a true divine revelation through nature as realized in devout contemplation. If it be said that such a recognition would have been impossible apart from a preceding succession of miraculous events, we might reply that this is very much a question of historical criticism; because if the miraculous events did not happen, as many, who have given great attention to the subject, maintain they did not, the psalm is still here to testify for itself. But at any rate, I may be permitted to use the Psalmist's contemplation of the heavens to illustrate the sense in which the natural origin of religion might possibly be asserted, without any offence to the irrepressible faith of mankind in the reality of a divine utterance. For the royal prophet saw God's rule in the order of the sky. He saw this because an inward voice prompted him to this interpretation. And in his loyalty to the predispositions thus awakened consisted the glory and the power of his faith.

Now, if it be only granted that this conjunction of the impressiveness of nature with predispositions divinely-established in the soul is capable of various

degrees, the suggestion made above, with regard to the remote origin of religion, may be accepted without any fear of eliminating the voice of God from history. For the awe which was enkindled in the breast of the savage by the strange natural objects which attracted his worship, so far as it was the beginning of a higher life, may surely without irreverence be regarded as a veritable inspiration. If any are shocked by such a thought, it will probably not be those who most strenuously insist that the being of the Most High is equally unimaginable and ineffable. Those most likely to be offended are they who are convinced that a verbal revelation has enabled them to conceive the Eternal truly as He is. Yet they feel no difficulty about the narrative which tells how Abraham recognized a divine command in the suggestion that he should make a burnt-offering of his son; they in all probability think it reasonable and likely that the same patriarch should expostulate against divine judgment on Sodom and Gomorrha, talking "as a man with his friend;" they see nothing but benign condescension in the divine procession between divided beasts, by which God is represented as taking a solemn oath according to the formula then in vogue; the limitation of the dew to Gideon's fleece, or its miraculous dryness, in answer to a needless and capricious demand for a sign, appears quite in accordance with the natural order of times in which God is supposed to have ruled the world on principles since laid aside.

But if any one ventures to suggest that in the old time before those fathers, good and really divine impulses might be disguised, as such impulses always are in their infancy, by the operation of brute instincts eventually to be superseded, he is in danger of being charged with an irreverence little short of blasphemy. Yet those who make the charge, if the religious teaching given in their schools be condemned because of the gross conceptions it gives of God's anger against sin, and of His vengeance in the unseen world, will often reply that purer ideas are impossible to children, and that this is the divine course of education. Whether that be so or not, I will not stop here to dispute; but the principle implied in the retort is undoubtedly sound; that the lowly beginnings of religious life are often strangely unlike its fruition. And that principle I take leave to apply to the case in hand.

The poor flint-wielder, that first Adam, who perhaps yet bore indubitable traces, in body as well as in mind, that he was "of the earth, earthy," was incapable yet of sharing the pathetic wonder of the far-advanced Sekese at the glory of the sky and the mystic vitality of the corn. But he was at least capable of comparison between hard and soft, curved and square, black and white. He knew when he saw a strange form which would not fit into his experience. And an oddly-formed black stone might very well arrest his attention. To invest the unusual and unknown with

unknown and indefinite powers, would, as we have suggested above, be the work of a prophet of the time. But at a certain stage of development the whole tribe would be susceptible to his influence. Then the fetish would become the sanction of vows, the guard against pestilence, the source of vengeance against treachery. And though the cultus which sprang up might be speedily corrupted with impurity and cruelty, there is nothing in this which ought to condemn as impious the attempt to trace religion up to such a source. The massacre of the Canaanites was in a very clear sense an act of worship. Yet surely they are right who contend that in this case the religious life of the slayers was superior to that of the slain. There are rites described and judgments commanded in the Mosaic Law, which the Christian in spirit cannot read without horror. But not the less do we insist on the divine legation of Moses as one of the greatest prophets whom the world has known. The cruelties and superstitions were no proper consequences of the impulse which he gave. They existed before, or were inevitable perversions wrought by pre-existing, and as yet ineradicable tendencies. And so it is quite conceivable, loathsome as are the abominations which we now associate with fetishism, that in its first origin it was a real impulse towards the invisible world; and that the strange objects, round which it gathered its power, first touched the awakening souls of men with that weird sense of

the immeasureable, which afterwards ripened into consciousness of a relation to the Infinite.

Should it be still objected that such a view has precisely the effect which I deprecated—of denying religion to be in any sense a revelation—I must venture to appeal to the whole view of existence maintained throughout this volume. For, believing that the whole universe, in matter and in spirit, is creatural when seen fragmentarily, divine in its real totality; believing that it is man's highest distinction to obey the inspiring predispositions which draw him to contemplations of the dimly apprehended yet for ever unknown Infinite; were I to suppose the faintest movement towards that divine life to be possible apart from genuine inspiration, it would be nothing short of intellectual suicide. What is really opposed to any idea of revelation is not this suggestion of its gradual dawn; but that atomic theory of nature which would make both dawn and noon equally meaningless. For that does undoubtedly assert, in a very real sense, the purely natural origin of religion, that is, its appearance without any breath of divine impulse. The notion would be something of this sort: that, at a particular period of human development, the brain molecules of a certain tribe came to be so arranged as to be peculiarly susceptible to the kind of agitation which is realized, on the conscious side, as wonder or awe; and farther, that the form in which the rays of light were reflected by some strange

object upon the retinas of a few men in the tribe excited that brain agitation to such a degree that, through sympathy, it was communicated to others. Still farther, on this hypothesis, it would be added that there is no other explanation needed; that in fact the brain molecules and their agitations were the ultimate reality, beyond or on the other side of which there was nothing whatever. Now that is precisely the view of religious history against which I am arguing and protesting. I admit the nerve-cells, brain molecules, vibrations, and all the physiological phenomena which can be alleged. But I insist that all these are the phenomena by which the Unknown is fragmentarily manifested; and farther, that these phenomena were so connected with succeeding ones as to form a continuity which we call religious history. This history irresistibly raises in our minds the idea of purpose or plan. And though we feel this idea to be something distinctively human, by which we dare not allege that God is limited; yet as we may not think lowlier of the Infinite than of ourselves, and cannot in this matter think anything higher, we will use that idea of a divine purpose as a symbol of what is assuredly immeasurably vaster and better than all our thoughts.

I have dwelt at some length upon the significance of fetishism; because it seems to me that any theory of religion must be unsatisfactory which is unable to include it, not only as fact, but as one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of all religious phenomena. In

regarding it as a stage of experience through which every race of man that ever had a religion must originally have passed, or the results of which must have been inherited by later races from their progenitors, I may be assuming too much; or rather I may be anticipating the issue of researches not yet carried far enough to justify a definite conclusion. But my object has been to put what seems to many the most unfavourable case that can possibly be made out against any divine meaning in religion; and to show that even assuming this to be established, a true theory of the essential nature of religion will point to an undeveloped spiritual significance underlying even the oldest superstitions. Yet that theory is not in the slightest degree dependent on the establishment of the case which has been put. For should it yet be proved hereafter, as seems but little likely now, that the earliest days were after all the golden age, or that pure monotheism at some period burst upon the world with the suddenness of a tropic sunrise; still it would be true that the essence of religion is an endeavour after a practical expression of man's relation to the Infinite. But that needs farther illustration.

In any progressive race, fetishism would inevitably grow into the worship of Nature. To those who regard only the effete superstitions of stagnant savage life such an assertion may seem in the last degree improbable. But if they would only try to imagine the sense of

larger life that must have been awakened by the first flutter of reverential awe in the dim humanity not far removed from brute unconsciousness, they would feel that so long as the emotion continued to be a vital element in an expanding nature it was sure to find continually greater and nobler objects. In many tribes the mystic feeling awakened by fantastic groups of stones might be satisfied and stereotyped by ceremonies, which came to be merely traditional habits. But in some one tribe that feeling might be extended to a tree growing by the side of the objects of reverence, or to a serpent which glided out from their shelter. The processes of the organic creation, pressed in some simple form upon wondering minds, would open far nobler contemplations than could be offered by mere singularity of shape. And under favourable conditions, a *seer* like the above quoted Sekese might become the prophet of a new and purer religion. Such a speculation is not without some hints of support from the complex phenomena of ancient systems. The monuments of Egypt, at least as they are described by ancient travellers and neo-platonic interpreters, would seem to have presented many signs of a very earnest recognition of the world's mystery. The inscription on the temple of Isis, "I am all that hath been, is, and shall be; and no mortal hath uncovered my veil," is a pregnant illustration typical of many others. But yet a worship, which could rise to contemplations so sublime, was for the most part exhibited as a cultus of brute

life. "Animal worship," says the Rev. John Hunt,* "is usually the lowest form of idolatry, and the mark of a low degree of civilization; but in Egypt it prevailed among a people famed in antiquity for cultivation and learning, and had its roots in a philosophy of being. We must distinguish between the worship of animals, and the worship of them as symbols: the latter was that of the Egyptians; it did not obscure the worship of the Gods, but was rather connected with it." When, however, we try to realize to ourselves by what process of thought or feeling, and precisely in what sense this apparently repulsive cultus was connected with the worship of gods, or "grew out of a philosophy of being," it seems incredible that an originally spiritual idea of the divine nature should seek to clothe itself in such ignoble forms; or that a dignified "philosophy of being" should of its own proper impulse express itself in the mummification of cats and dogs.

It is surely much more rational to suppose, that on a primeval fetishism there was superinduced an ever-growing perception of the mystery that underlies, not strange objects only, but all things that are. This feeling, accustomed to fetishistic expression, would take form in the attachment of a larger significance to the objects of reverence, and in the invention of idealized objects more easily associated with the larger feel-

* "Essay on Pantheism," Longmans, 1866, p. 48. I take this opportunity of acknowledging many obligations to a work, which compresses a library into a volume.

ing. The conservatism, which peculiarly characterizes religious worship, will amply account for the retention of fetishistic symbols long after the narrow conditions of thought existing in an earlier age had been overpassed; while at the same time this perception of universal mystery would quicken the reflections that necessitated a philosophy of being. The two tendencies would obviously unite to convert the old fetishistic objects into symbols of the occult powers which entered into the new theories of life. The original religions of the Aryan family all bear traces of some such process as this in the history of their development. It is no doubt a fine conception, that the oldest Aryan name of the supreme deity, "Dyaus," the Shining One, points to a time when our primeval forefathers worshipped the bright Spirit who fills the realms of space. But here again it is difficult or impossible to conceive that in sober fact a dead and degrading fetishism was ever superinduced upon a worship so sublime. Yet the traces in Brahmanism of an aboriginal fetishism seem too clear to be denied. If, as Creuzer says,* "in the earliest stage of the Hindoo religion the supreme deity was worshipped with bloodless offerings, such as the fruits of the earth and milk of cows," it is tolerably clear that such a cultus was inconsistent with any spiritual idea of God. The early elemental worship, said to be proved by the Rig-Veda, is quite consistent with the course of development which I have suggested

* As quoted by the Rev. John Hunt, op. cit.

in the case of the Egyptian religion. It resulted through the extension of the sense of mystery from single objects to the whole of nature. And, apart from such a process, it is impossible to understand how the Hindoo idols can have continued to be of such a degraded type; or how the relics of tree and serpent worship could have been so generally intermingled with the ceremonies and the symbols of Brahmanism. Mr. James Fergusson, indeed, holds that serpent worship is properly characteristic of the Turanian races, and certainly owes its origin to them alone; while he accounts for its practice by the Aryan races through the contact of the latter with the aboriginal tribes whom they supplanted. It does not, however, seem very likely that the higher race would be ready to adopt the superstitious practices of the lower whom they despised. Nor is the supposition necessary in order to retain substantially Mr. Fergusson's theory. The Turanian races may fairly be regarded as more nearly representative of that lower humanity from which they and the Aryans alike have sprung. That lower humanity may be supposed to have generally practised fetishism of the low and cruel type represented by serpent worship. This the Aryans still continued to cherish, when a higher development had raised them above the parent stock. But to it they soon added a nearer approximation to a pure nature worship; while on the other hand the slower Turanians preserved their old religious habits intact, or only

received from their more advanced brethren the suggestions of a higher culture.

If we turn to the more poetic worship of the Greeks, we find the sense of nature's mystery almost merged in the joyful recognition of a universal life, which throbs in the sea, and murmurs in the streams, and thunders in the storm; which finds a sort of rhythmic expression in all animated nature; and rises to intensest utterance in the emotions and the beauty of human life. But the Greeks were not without their traces of an aboriginal fetishism. It is well known that the most sacred images were not the ablest works of art; but that such far-famed divinities as "Diana of the Ephesians," and the old Athene of the Acropolis, were characterized by a monstrous or barbarous form, dating back from those earlier beginnings of symbolic idolatry, which, as suggested above, in all probability marked the transition from previous fetishism. Images which "fell down from Jupiter" naturally suggest meteoric stones. The sacred oracle of Dodona, the most ancient of which we have any record, is certainly indicative of tree worship. And the association of particular trees with special divinities, as, for instance, that of the oak with Zeus, of the laurel with Apollo, of the olive with Athene, and of the vine with Bacchus, would appear to point in the same direction.

But it is not my intention now to write a history of the development of religion. It is sufficient for my purpose if it shall appear that the idea of this

history, which will in all probability ultimately prevail, and than which no theory would seem at first sight more unfavourable to the reality of the divine life in man, is at all events perfectly consistent with the suggestion, that mankind have by inherent predisposition a tendency to recognise their relation to some transcendent and all-embracing mystery of existence. No matter how rudimentary, or how liable to debasing perversions the earliest expressions of this feeling were; still, if by its own law of continuity this feeling has manifested itself in ever more expansive and lofty forms, consistently with man's wider comprehension of life, we may fairly argue that religion is as legitimate a fruit of human development as science, or commerce, or art. We can no more eliminate it from our total conception of the ideal human life, than we can exclude social loyalty or intellectual ambition. At the same time we may need perhaps a better understanding of its essence, and one that will more completely explain the whole of its historical phenomena. And such an understanding appears to be furnished by the conception of religion as man's endeavour after a practical expression of his relation to the Infinite. When first the earliest savage was startled by strange natural forms which gave him a weird feeling of veiled power, the sense of the Infinite dimly dawned in the human world; and the simple ceremonies, which too readily degenerated into cruel orgies, were at least an expression of the fearful subjection that afterwards ripened into reverential loyalty

of soul. The extension of the sense of mysterious power, from a few strange objects to all the energies of Nature, was accompanied by an expansion and a refinement of feeling, such as was by no means always adequately expressed in the cultus of more highly developed religions. If we would find that awe of the powers manifested in nature which seems to loom through the deep shadows of Egyptian temples, or that eager sense of animated beauty which has adorned the religious monuments of Greece, we must not look to priestly sacrifices, nor to ceremonies of forgotten meaning, but to the great minds who summed up in themselves the growth of millenniums, and who, in their union of intellectual force with spiritual susceptibility, have been amongst the Aryan race what the prophets were amongst the Jews.

The tone of Æschylus, for instance, impresses every student with the earnestly religious nature of the man. It is true that the religion on which he insisted was to a large extent one of gloom and terror; but this may be partly explained by his hostility to political innovations, a feeling deeply rooted in the formal associations of an ancient faith, and one which led him naturally to exhibit the more threatening aspects of his heartfelt belief. But in his poetic realization of the dread sanctions guarding time-honoured objects of reverence, one cannot but recognize a solemn and ennobling feeling of man's constant relation to transcendent powers, which were only inadequately ex-

pressed in the national cultus. The reader of the Eumenides is startled to find himself touched by a sympathy half awful, half pathetic, for the repulsive Shapes which proclaim their wrongs with shrieks that suggest tears of blood. But these shapes float dimly on a darkness that is sacred. Behind them is the everlasting verity of a justice upheld by infinite Power. The rugged majesty, characteristic of both the conceptions and the style of this prophetic poet, is inspired and maintained by deep moral sentiments which, whatever their mistakes, show a pathetic loyalty to the supremacy of a supernatural and inscrutable rule. The demand for cleansing by blood, to be effected by dark and dreadful rites, impresses the imagination even of unsuperstitious ages with a strange satisfaction. Considered apart from their tragic surroundings, in bare and prosaic reality, such ceremonies might appear irrelevant and puerile. But the satisfaction, which we feel in the poetic imagination of the claims pressed by the Furies, arises from a sense of adequacy in the tragedian's realization of the sanctity of eternal law.

There is not the same wild grandeur in the poet who followed next in time, and who, according to the critical judgment of many, attained a higher poetic rank. But Bishop Thirlwall's essay on "the Irony of Sophocles"* brings out with great power the background of mysterious and resistless fate, upon which the graceful fancy of the poet played. Nor are there

* Philological Museum, Vol. II.

wanting in the works of Sophocles strains of melodious music, in which the sunbeams that glint over running streams, and the dark olive shadow, and the sweet recesses of the hills, seem to betoken more of that sense of something mystic in the beauty of nature than is often attributed to the classic age. Of Euripides let it suffice to quote the words in which a living poet perhaps intellectually greater, but certainly inferior in powers of rhythmic expression, makes him a voice from the dead:—

> "Five hundred years ere Paul spoke, Felix heard,—
> How much of temperance and righteousness,
> Judgment to come, did I find reason for,
> Corroborate with my strong style that spared
> No sin, nor swerved the more from branding brow
> Because the sinner was called Zeus and God?
> How nearly did I guess at that Paul knew?
> How closely come, in what I represent
> As duty, to his doctrine yet a blank?"

I prefer to take these poets rather than philosophers as exponents of the religious life of Greece. For, to attempt to gather from these latter any conception of the national religion, would be to commit the mistake of confounding religion with intellectual systems; a mistake which almost every age discovers, and then proceeds to perpetrate afresh. But there was one man of a later day, who though not a Greek by race, was to a certain extent naturalized in the realm of Greek feeling and thought, and who, clothing the teachings of a philosopher in the language and rhythm of a poet,

stands out like a portent from the general level of superficial Roman literature, as the prophet of atomic atheism; a man whom we conceive with wild burning eyes, contemplating in ecstacy the order of heaven and earth; stung with scorn for a peddling priestism trading on slavish fear; while he fastened with eager daring on the assurance that the world-wide vision which enthralled his soul need not be, and could not be, explained by anything greater than itself. No reflections, however slight and hasty, on the evolution of religion can possibly leave unnoticed the fascinating and startling figure of Lucretius. Professedly abjuring all to which it would be worth while to give the name of God, he yet speaks with a deep solemnity of tone, such as awakens in the most reverent heart sympathies apparently unaccountable. While he declares, in words, that there is nothing inexplicable, and that the whole frame of the universe is an inanimate structure of soulless atoms, there is nevertheless a wistfulness in his gaze, and a tenderness in his admiration, such as are inevitably suggestive of mystic feeling. Magnifying the human intellect with daring assertions of equality with heaven, such as taken by themselves alone might appear symptomatic of ignorant arrogance, he yet shows on the whole a feeling of the greatness of the universe, such as evidently produces in him the fruit, not of sullen acquiescence in the inevitable, but of loyal submission. And that seems near akin to the very soul of religion. The truth is, his philosophy is

incongruous with his genius. He ought to have lived,—if we may presume to say that anything ought to have happened which has not,—in an age of keen religious life such as feels eternal God to be more real than the fragmentary world of phenomena, and which, losing all old shadowy forms in the dawning of a bright regeneration, interprets the Ineffable only by the most ennobling and unselfish inspirations of the heart. In such an age Lucretius, recognizing in religion not a blasphemous contradiction to nature, but an apprehension of the mystery which all nature owns, might have been a saint, an apostle, a martyr, though never a genuine priest. His sense of the supreme worthiness of natural power, and his insight into the true sublimity of universal order, were outraged and tortured by the impious and ridiculous meanness of the interpretation religiously put upon the government of the world. And the agony of his indignation appeared to be soothed and healed by a system of thought which vindicated the supremacy of nature, and, making the world its own explanation, banished Olympian demons into nothingness or futility. But throughout one can hardly help feeling, that the vehemence of emotion with which religion is repudiated is a religion in itself, and has a manifest place in the development of that veneration which is one expression of man's relation to the Infinite.

"When human life lay prone, a shame to see,
Crushed to the earth by stern religion's sway,

Who, down from heavenly regions stretched her head
With horrid aspect, threatening mortal men,
A man of Greece first dared return the gaze
From mortal eyes, and first rebellion raised.
Him never lightning, sacred fanes, nor heaven
With threatening roar could daunt; nay, roused the more
The eager valour of his soul, which longed
First to break through the bars of nature's gates.
Then keen, strong intellect prevailed, and far
Beyond the flaming walls of the world he ranged,
And all the immense explored with mind and soul;
Then, conqueror, brings us news of what may be,
What may not; nay, of the very law that deals
To everything its force, and fixes bounds.
So, in her turn, religion underfoot
We spurn; and victory evens us with heaven."*

The loyalty expressed by these words to that stately order of material things, which had been traduced and blasphemed by the slavish fears of superstition, is itself a spiritual sentiment, such as no merely intellectual opinions can altogether neutralize. Indeed, this susceptibility of the poet's nature to the mystic aspects of man's relation to the universe is illustrated clearly enough in many a word of tenderness and eager desire. Take, for instance, his opening appeal to Venus,—joy of men and gods, through whose power, beneath the gliding stars, the sail-flecked sea and all the pregnant fields of earth are crowded with life; the bright presence from which winds and storm-clouds flee away—which the sweet, spangled earth greets with springing flowers; under which the sea is

* "De Rerum Natura," I., 62-79, Lachmann's Ed.

wrinkled with smiles; while the quiet heaven beams with all-pervasive light.* Or, again, take the opening of the fifth book, where—notwithstanding his intellectual confidence—he shows how, to the emotions of his heart, the grandeur of the world surpasses all human expression. Such passages as these betray something very like a religious sense of man's subordination to a universal Life. True, the personality of the goddess is to him only a poetic figure. But that, to express which he feels the need of this poetic figure, the profuse beauty, the warmth and light, and living wealth that crowd the world; all this is to him a transcendent reality. In truth, taking him all in all, in his intellectual keenness, in his realization of a Universe, in his enthusiastic contemplation, in his adoration of the majesty of order, in the sublime daring with which he confronts the everlasting problem, the individual against the All, we cannot help seeing in Lucretius the utmost result possible to mere nature-worship, apart from a deeper inspiration.

But the working of that deeper inspiration now demands our attention. There are symptoms of it in such men as the tragedians of whom we have spoken. There are far more in Socrates, considered as a spiritual leader rather than a philosopher. For, however much we may allow for the influence of that traditional and growing feeling which, beginning in the narrow bewilderment of fetishism, developed into

* "De Rerum Natura," I. Invocation.

symbolic polytheism, and culminated in such a recognition of the impressiveness of creation, as we have seen in Lucretius, yet there was in such men an element of personal subordination to, and communion with Supreme Power in the form of moral authority, such as cannot be accounted for apart from that spiritual nature which realizes the life of God in the soul of man. It is one thing to feel that this world around me is great, surpassing comprehension, bearing everywhere the imperial robe of commanding order; it is quite another thing, or at least a very different aspect of the same spiritual sense, to feel that the Life which pervades the world breathes also in me,—suggesting, directing, and empowering that loyalty of thought and action which makes me consciously a harmonious part of a divine whole. There is nothing in such a distinction inconsistent with the continuity of religious evolution. For these two feelings are essentially one; and were both indistinguishably involved in that earliest movement of the spiritual nature, which resulted in fetishism. But, as ages rolled on, the education of the spiritual nature would make it more susceptible not only to outward impressions, but to inward influences. A man in the mental and spiritual condition of the Kaffir Sekese is on the very borders of prophetic inspiration. And, speaking now only of the outward facts, it is from some such source that all historical religions have arisen. By historical religions I mean those, the origins of which are dated within his-

torical memory, though their records are of course of very various historical value. In this sense Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity are all historical religions. And they have likewise this also in common, that they are all prophetic religions, in the sense of deriving their first impulse from some one who spoke for God, from a feeling of indwelling inspiration, and therefore with a certain divine authority. It is not necessary for our purpose here to argue the possibility or otherwise of miraculous credentials by which divine authority might be proved. For the authority to which I allude needs no proof. It consists in the power with which a deeper divine consciousness appeals by energetic utterance to the minds of men who have reached a certain stage of spiritual growth. A man like Sakya-muni, feeling the corruptions of the society, and the powerlessness of the religion, under which he lived, was driven by a resistless impulse to feel after a re-adjustment of those relations of mankind to infinite Power, which he felt to be inadequately represented or grotesquely misrepresented by a perverted religion. The aim might not be presented in this form to his own consciousness. To his mind true felicity, supreme blessedness, or essential truth might be the object of his search. But this is manifestly only another way of describing the right relation of man to infinite Power. Intellectual inquiry after this would be philosophical research; while an endeavour after the practical expression of

this would be religion. That the motive of Sackya-muni was from the first a religious impulse, is shown, if we may trust our information, by his actions. His renunciation of splendour and state—his identification of himself with suffering humanity—his retirement into a solitude which was to present in its intensest form the problem of individual life,—all show, not so much philosophical reflection, as an earnest desire to live out the true relation of the one to the All. And the ideas at which he arrived of the essential evil of individual existence, and of the blessedness of Nirvâna, were not so much philosophical conclusions as the feeling out of the soul towards an unlimited loyalty to the Infinite.

In the story of Arabian religion it seems not improbable that we have before our eyes the whole process of development, from fetishism, through symbolic idolatry, to a more or less spiritual faith. The black stone, which from time immemorial has given a special sacredness to the temple of Mecca, seems an undoubted relic of the fetishism of a prehistoric period. There appears to be no way of accounting for its special honours, except by a traditional feeling which dates from a time when the unusual character of the object stirred the first germs of spiritual emotion in some barbaric tribe. Mohammed, however, found his countrymen practising a somewhat elaborate idolatry, which like all others appears to have been symbolic of the inscrutable powers of nature. But in the cave whither,

at the age of forty years, he withdrew for solitary contemplation, he, like Sackya-muni and Socrates, seems to have realized an inward impulse, which predominated over the outward impressions wrought upon his soul by traditional interpretations of man's relation to the Infinite. "He consulted," says Gibbon, "the spirit of fraud or enthusiasm, whose abode is not in the heavens, but in the mind of the prophet." * We have in these words a just distinction perverted by a sneer. No one now will attribute to Mohammed, at least in the outset of his career, any purpose of deliberate fraud. Nor, when we contrast with the distracted and effete interpretations of nature current in his time, that intense unity of infinite Power which he proclaimed, can there be any hesitation in granting that what, at least to his own race, was decidedly an onward movement, must have resulted from some special individual realization of that creative energy which is the inspiration of universal growth. The errors and excesses into which he afterwards fell,—the sensual

* "Roman Empire," vol. vi., p. 222; Smith's edition. "I am ignorant," he says previously (p. 211), "and I am careless of the blind mythology of the barbarians, of the local deities, of the stars, the air, and the earth, of their sex, their titles, their attributes or subordination." How contemptuously incredulous Gibbon would have been, had he been told that the subjects which he despises would become matter of intensest interest to a wiser and more philosophic generation! Surely the passage is now a satire on the arrogance of contempt for any phenomena of human development.

conceptions of immortality, exciting selfishness in its most effeminate forms,—the cruel intolerance appealing to selfishness in its guise of arrogant self-assertion,—do undoubtedly detract from the spiritual fame of Mohammed so much, that it is difficult to credit him with any high degree of that divine communion which we may fairly regard as the essence of individual religion. When compared with the pure unselfish earnestness of Sakya-muni's hunger after eternal good, the spiritual ambition of Mohammed seems nothing but a fierce if brilliant fanaticism. I say nothing of any comparison with the heroes of Christian inspiration. The stupendous power of Christ had lifted them to conceptions of the divine life so high that, as Augustine finely says of St. John, such men dwelt apart in loneliness like that of the great mountains, whose loftiness is measured, not by comparison, nor yet by imagination, but by the flood of blessings which they pour down on the little hills and plains below. This immense superiority of the life inspired by Christ has made it difficult for Christian thought to realize, or even to believe in, the continuity of religious evolution. And yet there are so many strong compelling reasons which now bind us to the effort; and the whole conception of man's position in the universe is so irrational and incongruous on any other hypothesis; that we are bound to consider afresh whether the differences between Christianity and other religions are such as necessarily to exclude any generalization

involving them all,—a generalization which would make them all alike manifestations of a mysterious and sacred "nisus" in the human soul to attain an ever truer expression of our relation to the Infinite. To those who still maintain, in name at least, the miraculous infallibility of the Christian Scriptures, such a generalization is of course out of the question. In their view there can be no continuous growth of the divine life. For the Almighty has descended into the middle of history with a written explanation of the whole subject, less than which cannot be accepted, and beyond which nothing can be desired. But to those who do not receive the infallibility of the Bible, the attempt at such a generalization, on the hypothesis of a really divine inspiration variously manifested, has become absolutely necessary. For no modification of that infallibility can be stated, or even conceived, which, while allowing errors in the Bible, should preserve its absolute authority upon any subject whatever. The change may take place at various rates of progress; and in the spiritual history of many individual minds may never be accomplished. But assuredly the surrender of the unconditional infallibility of the Scriptures leads, not logically only, but by practical necessity, to the recognition that the Bible is on all subjects whatever a mixture of truth and error, which both alike find their approximate analogues in other far inferior records of religion. And when we arrive at this position, the refusal to attempt for our-

selves, if not for others, any generalization founded on the unity of the religious impulse, must necessarily amount to a sort of spiritual suicide. No reason can be given from such a position for treating Christianity as differing, otherwise than in degree of superiority, from other efforts to give practical expression to our sense of relation to the Infinite. If other great religions which have swayed the spiritual affections of millions, and whose empire would count in a few generations as many devotees as Christianity can reckon in two thousand years, can be accounted for by purely natural, that is molecular causes, it is impossible to show any reason why the mingling of truth and error in Christianity should not be accounted for in the same way. On the other hand, if we insist, as actual spiritual experience compels us to do, on the reality of a divine afflatus breathing through the forms of Christianity, it is impossible to deny some measure of inspiration to the originating impulse, or to the surviving spiritual power, of any religion which has made men feel, and show by unselfish devotion, a loyalty to the rule of heaven. The question, Has God spoken to men? no longer means, Has he once broken an everlasting silence? but does the race in all its higher progress manifest a consciousness of a veritable divine impulse to which all progress is due?

It is this question which I think may be answered with joyful confidence by a true doctrine of continuity in religious development. It is to illustrate the uni-

versal realization of that impulse that I have called attention to the phenomena of fetishism, and to the constantly-expanding spiritual forces which have raised its narrow, almost brutish, sense of amazement and fear into an assurance of inward communion with the inscrutable Power that embraces and sways the world. It is as an instance of this that I have insisted upon the prophetic inspiration of Sakya-muni. And no distortions and perversions, with which individual constitution or outward circumstances affected and perverted the inspiration of Mohammed, can make me hesitate to believe, that when in the cave of Hera there started into his mind the conviction, "there is one God, and it is the mission of my life to proclaim Him" he was in true communion with the Power which makes all things one, and felt a special impulse of divine purpose.

It may be objected indeed that here we can have no illustration of any world-wide evolution; because, as compared with Christianity which had already prevailed for six centuries, Mohammedanism would be a step in retrogression. But the objection would only show a misunderstanding of the doctrine here urged. For the true idea of a continuous and progressive inspiration of mankind does not at all necessarily imply that the resulting development should be equably realized all the world over at the same time. This would be as absurd as it would be to insist that, according to the evolution of species, successive ages

ought to show everywhere similar, or at least, equal advances on the simplicity of primeval monads. The real theory only implies that wherever an advance is made it everywhere passes through equivalent stages, and is maintained by new applications of an original and imperishable force. As applied to the history of religion, at least so far as my idea of it is concerned, this would imply that the line of progress, unless broken by foreign influences, should everywhere pass from fetishism, through an idolatry symbolic of nature-worship, to religions properly prophetic. And perhaps no better example of such a progress could be found than that which seems suggested by the connection of the Caaba, first with the ancient idolatries of Arabia, and then with Mohammedanism. We should not perhaps attribute very much weight to the fact that Mohammed himself was of that princely race to which the guardianship of the sacred stone was specially entrusted. But as in his own person the religious history of Arabia culminated, his genealogical association with the ancient religion gives a special completeness to the outward embodiment of our illustration. No doubt the circumstance of Mohammed's acquaintance with the Judæo-Christian Scriptures detracts somewhat from the complete applicability of his case to the elucidation of our argument. But not altogether; for if Mohammed had no belief in the reality of Biblical inspiration, his adoption of scriptural suggestions sprang entirely from his own inward impulse; while, on the other hand, if

he did believe in a special divine mission of Moses and of Christ, his insistance on his own supplementary mission would only be in accordance with a recognition, in some sort, of that continuance of a divine impulse to all generations, on which I am now insisting. Besides, if absolute and unconditional originality were to be made the test of any real inspiration, no instance of such a thing can ever be found in the whole history of the world.

I maintain therefore that Mohammed may fairly be taken, equally with Sakya-muni, as an illustration of the rise of prophetic religions through that sense of an inward and personal inspiration, which constitutes the third great stage in the history of religious development. The simplicity and spiritual purity of his first doctrines; the devotion which drove him to face social ostracism, persecution, and possible death in the proclamation of those doctrines; the persistent earnestness with which he persevered amidst all discouragement, at an age when the end of life looms into view; the impossibility of any human forecast of the strange and lurid splendours which awaited his career; all unite in justifying our conviction, that in Mohammed had become articulate that divine impulse for which his race was ripe; or that a veritable inspiration converted symbolic glimpses of the sacred mysteries of the universe into a loyal devotion to the all-embracing Power which makes it one.

I have not attempted any sketch of the systems

inaugurated by these prophetic men whom I have taken as types. For our present purpose, it does not matter in the least what these systems were; if only we can recognize in them an advance from symbolic nature-worship towards an appreciation of the unity and spirituality of sovereign Power. Sakya-muni's disciples, who surrendered luxury and wealth; who showed their impatience of the narrowness of individual life by a course of self-forgetful action or contemplation, which they believed would ultimately merge them in the only true being, non-existence, showed therein that loyalty of soul which is the essence of faith. And Mohammed's earliest followers, who realized in his splendid presence the tokens of a divine mission; who forsook their idols and their kindred for the glory of a higher truth; whose consciences were refined, whose energies were braced by the dread thought of One Sovereign Ruler of the world, showed also, though under the influence of a very different ideal, the same loyalty of soul. To both alike their new religion was dear, because it seemed more nobly capable than anything in their experience of giving practical expression to their sense of relation to the Infinite.

In dealing, however, though very generally, with the other historical religions mentioned above, it is impossible to avoid considering more closely the nature and the reason of the influence which they wield over our souls. For if Mosaism or Christianity touches the hearts of men only by the communication of opinions supposed

to be infallibly correct, it is impossible to bring either under the generalization which is attempted here. Indeed they would both belong far more to divine philosophy than to human religion. It is no part of my purpose here to discuss the authenticity or authoritative value of religious records. It is sufficient to reiterate, what no one can deny, that these are matters on which various opinions are actually held; and which must be decided, in the largest meaning of the words, not by faith, but by sight. I may however be permitted to assume the substantial accuracy of the memories which venerate Moses as a leader of prophetic power, who was mighty both in word and in deed, through the confidence he had, and which he communicated to others, that God was with him. To what extent the religious traditions which are now prefixed to the story of his ministry existed in his day, we are quite unable to determine. To the symbolic idolatry of Egypt, however, he seems certainly to have stood in the same relation as Mohammed to that of Arabia. The story of his instruction in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and perhaps the tradition of Joseph's connection with the priest of On, may be a reminiscence of Hebrew participation in the idolatrous mysteries of Egypt. As we have said above, absolute unconditional originality can be claimed for no one. The Jewish race is one of such strongly-marked prophetic gifts, that it is extremely probable the germs of that intense spirituality which afterwards characterised them may have existed amongst their nomade

ancestors. But the sudden development of that spirituality into a power which broke the sceptre of Pharaoh, and raised a horde of whining slaves into a conquering nation, must apparently have been due to some extraordinary personal characteristics in the great Lawgiver. We need have no hesitation in believing what, if disproved, would only be an illustration removed from history to imagination, that in his lonely banishment among the wilds of Sinai, the paltry emblems of Egyptian worship seemed shrivelled up into miserable mummies. And in dread contrast an Eternal Presence blazed in the sky, brooded in the shadows of the hills, and made the weird silence vocal with a voice mightier than the thunder. But it was not nature that spoke to Moses; not at least nature passive, developed, made. He stood there the most glorious thing in nature; and all the powers that went to kindle the sun, or pile the mountains, or rear the palms, or give grace or vigour to bird or beast, united the quintessence of their energies in the body and soul of the man whose contemplations they held enthralled. It was not from without, but from within, that the great impulse came which made him the herald of a higher religious life. That Egypt had taught him the mystery of existence we may well believe. But it could not give him that which would enable him to feel at one with the Presence he realized amid the solitudes of Sinai. There was no power to grasp the heart; there was no breath at all, in the

emblematic paraphernalia by which Egypt hinted at Eternal Being. But here, in temples reared by no human hands, the prophet felt, with an intensity for which nothing but divine communion could account, the Everlasting Life which is at once the centre and circumference of all things. Yet no vague impersonality could hold his soul with a grasp at once so imperious and tender as that which now he felt. No veiled Isis, muttering dim words of all that is and can be, could fire the soul with resolves that fructified in loyal action. The Great Spirit, of whom perhaps his wandering forefathers spoke, seemed to find their child again in the desert which had been their home. Why should their descendants serve strangers in a land which was not theirs, and gods, whose meanness mocked the glory of the world? And then while sky, mountain, and desert burned in a silence that seemed oppressed by one stupendous Presence, there came into his heart the words "*I am that I am; thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*"

Some incidents of the succeeding history would seem to cast doubt upon the extent to which the Hebrew Monotheism was developed by the direct influence of Moses. But that is a question with which we have at present little concern. It does at any rate seem to be clear, that, owing to influences which were traced back to Moses, and which were continually revived by fresh prophetic inspiration, the

Hebrew race believed themselves to have a special mission in the destinies of the world, and to be sustained in its fulfilment by the protection and guidance of the supreme God, who—as their best teachers assured them,—was spiritual in His nature, inscrutable in His majesty, not to be compared to, or symbolized by, any created thing in heaven or earth. That this special destiny of theirs was merely one of conquest and self-seeking supremacy, is an idea that may find some support in the earlier and more savage memories of the nation, but is quite incongruous with the tone of those higher prophetic voices which proclaimed, that what the priests were to the favoured people, the favoured people should be to the whole world. "Ye shall be unto Me" said the divine voice, "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Echoing this, Isaiah declared "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord, men shall call you the ministers of our God." And it was a steadfast tradition, dating from time immemorial, that by the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed. Side by side with such perceptions of these higher possibilities of the national destiny there was a fierce and arrogant spirit, which imparted bitterness to resentment under persecution, and which, having its origin in a perverted spiritual pride, totally incomprehensible to western nations, gave philosophic foreigners the impression that the essence of Jewish religion was a hatred of the whole human race. But that there were much nobler

influences at work in the development of Mosaic inspiration is abundantly proved, not only by the heavenly music of the greater prophets, but by the undoubted fact of the organic connection between Judaism and Christianity. Certainly, enemies themselves being judges, it must be conceded that never in the history of the world has there been known a spiritual power so sublimely creative as that which was wielded by Christ. But granting this, it must needs be allowed that many post-canonical Jewish teachers showed a spirituality of conception, and an expansiveness of sympathy, which must have done much to prepare a fitting soil for the germination of the higher religion. In fine, whatever else may be accepted or rejected in regard to the Old Testament dispensation, one feels that the ancient Jews had a very strong sense of a national and individual relation to unseen and infinite Power. And whether in the minute observances of the Law, or in their appeals to "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon;" whether in their forecast of supreme dominion, or in their yearning after proselytes; whether in their fierce scorn of idolatry or in the pure, sweet breathings of their peerless psalmody; their whole religion in all its growth was a persistent endeavour, sustained with extraordinary vitality of purpose, after a practical expression of that relation to the Infinite, in which they realized their exalted mission. The faith constituting their spiritual power, was not the belief that this or that had

happened in times gone by; even less did it consist in theological opinion, as the non-metaphysical character of all their prophetic writings would show; but it rather consisted in that loyalty of soul to their sense of divine relations and a divine destiny, which drew them to find their highest joy in communion with God.

The one thing that seems most widely to distinguish both Judaism and Christianity from other historical religions, and indeed from all other religions of the world, is the persistent renewal, in forms adapted to succeeding ages, of the divine afflatus to which they owed their birth. In the application of this remark, of course, we must regard the two religions as different stages in one organic growth. Buddhism, notwithstanding the marvellous power of its early enthusiasm, soon fell into a condition, not so much of suspended animation, as of permanent paralysis, from which no revival is conceivable. Mohammedanism, after it had flown with the swiftness of a wind-driven fire round the twintered frame-work of a sleepy church, glowed for a while in lurid splendour, and then, as is the manner of exhausted fires, cooled down from the extremities towards the dying source of heat. Outbursts of fanaticism there have been and are; dances of mad dervishes, and rabid Wahabeeism; like the tongues of flame that suddenly shoot from unsuspected cores of heat in a consumed ruin; but any genuine renewal, in forms adapted to other times, of the resistless im-

pulse which swept Mohammed to surprising victory, there never has been; and we may fairly regard it as inconceivable. How different was the history of the Mosaic religion! The first impulse given in the wilds of Sinai was not the kindling of a flame; it was the birth of a living force. And this, as life ever will, renewed itself from age to age in forms continually modified by the circumstances of the times. The great soldiers of the Israelites were always men instinct with prophetic fire; their greatest kings were those whom a sense of the nearness of God subordinated in heart and soul and will to the fulfilment of a divine mission. The hereditary priesthood fell, of course, under the inevitable doom of effete conventionality. But the priests were more than rivalled by that prophetic race whose genealogy, being spiritual not physical, handed on through a succession of keen susceptible souls the sacred torch once kindled by the breath of God. There seems to us now a pathetic simplicity in the unembarrassed innocence with which the old records tell us how "an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, 'Ye have not obeyed my voice, why have ye done this?'" or how, "when the children of Israel called unto the Lord because of the Midianites" "there came an angel of the Lord and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah" and saluted Gideon with the words, "the Lord is with thee thou mighty man of valour;" or how the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson, enabling him to slay a thousand men

with the jaw-bone of an ass. But there is more in such reminiscences than a merely mythopœic imagination. They show rather an imagination animated and directed in all its workings by the sense of an ever-recurrent inspiration from the eternal world. Never, not even in the flat, sad level, which stretches with a bright interlude of Maccabean glory, from the captivity to the Christian era, was the Jewish race wholly unvisited by special inward impulses from the Power that outwardly moulds the world. When a corrupt priesthood reduced the old religion to a fraudulent pretence, the spiritual power of Samuel stirred it with fresh energy and inaugurated a new era. When, under the weak villany of Ahab, "truth had fallen in the streets and equity could not enter," and when, with the utter dethronement of justice, hope had vanished from the future, Elijah flashed like a thunderbolt across the darkened heaven, and with the shock of his fierce words and deeds light came back once more. In the later days of the monarchy, when it began to be apparent that the political framework of old Jewish life could not long withstand the pressure of mighty empires, slowly crushing upon it like ice-floes on a vessel in the Arctic seas; then arose that nobler race of prophets, of whom Isaiah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk are types; and who proclaimed in the spiritual principles underlying the ancient law, the germs of a future grander than the past. There are psalms of the period of the captivity, or later, recording so simple

and pure a sense of divine communion,—songs of Zion, so changeless in the kindling freshness of their yet breathing life, instinct with such immortal skill to touch and heal passionate or despairing souls,—that we may well understand how, dating from such times, they have seemed to many like a portent, not to be explained by anything short of an arrest of nature's laws. Take for instance Psalm cxix., that meditation which with sweet monotony strikes for ever the golden string, deep buried in the heart, a string implying in its strange susceptibilities the reality of a music not of this world, but harmonizing all worlds in one. There is no poetry; there is little rhythm; there is no intellectual insight; there is no comprehensive philosophy, in the gentle life that yearns and pleads through these undying words. But there is not one verse throughout, which does not tell of a man to whom the Infinite Power was a living presence, a whispering voice, a beneficent law, a constant inspiration, the everlasting arms in which he lay, trustful, hopeful, though often tearful, as a little child. Such are the phenomena that we mark in the growth of the Mosaic religion; a deep enthralling sense of national and personal relation to the Infinite, the practical expression of which relation was modified from age to age by the pressure of recurring impulses of inspiration against the circumstances of the times, but always so as to make spiritual declension merely the retirement preliminary to a higher spring of spiritual attainment. In one word

Isaiah, bemoaning the godless weakness of his day, summed up the causes that saved Judaism from the fate of other historical religions, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

We assume, throughout this exposition, the true divinity of the impulse which inspires in man a sense of his relation to the Infinite, and excites the desire to give practical expression to this consciousness. But on the other hand it ought to be borne in mind that, according to the ideas here advanced, this inspiration does not ensure the accuracy of the expression in which human endeavour results. The impulse however is of God; like every creative energy it is essentially good. And though the mysterious course of human affairs is such that, to our conceptions, this impulse seems to be baffled and perverted at every step of development; yet every movement which is achieved by its victory over the narrowness of creature life is a real advance towards the blessedness and purity of that state of existence, in which, as St. Paul says, "God shall be all in all." It was well that primeval man should be roused out of mere brute self-feeling by his wonder at meteoric stones, or other strange natural objects. It was good that a later race should realize the mysterious Power encompassing all that is, and manifesting itself in every natural form alike. It was better that a strong inward yearning should draw prophetic souls into the consciousness of

God, and empower them with a spiritual energy commanding the sympathy of others. But the noblest particular manifestation of this divine impulse in history was the mission of Christ; who bearing with unchallenged fitness the title "Son of Man," showed that the true significance of this title was "Son of God."

I will not enter upon questions of dogmatic theology; the very object of this essay being to exhibit the essence of religion as independent of them all. Our conception of the person of Christ is necessarily dependent, not only upon our favoured canons of historical criticism, but also upon our ideas of the nature of God. But whatever may be our notions of criticism or theosophy, the essence of our religion is the fealty with which we bear ourselves in such relations to the Infinite as we have been able to conceive or feel. And it is the power of Christ to exalt, to refine, to intensify our inward sense of these divine relations, which makes him "the chief among ten thousand" ideals that have inspired the loyalty of men. I am well aware that such a description of the mission of Christ will, by thousands of devout hearts, be spurned as inadequate in the extreme. For the eager adoration, which is the just prerogative of that transcendent Name, will allow no comparison between the Sun of Righteousness and the stars whose glimmer is extinguished by His rise. Yet if there was even the feeblest spark of original inspiration in other and inferior prophets, the difference,

even though it be like that between a star of the tenth magnitude and the sun, must still be one of degree. Nor for our present purpose can any dogma of Christ's supernatural being affect the question. Whether such a dogma is true or false, it is here entirely irrelevant. For on the hypothesis of its truth, all that can be said is that, at a crisis in the world's history, such a supernatural Being was needed, to crown the development of man's divine life by a spiritual power altogether beyond the range of strictly human capacity. While, on the opposite hypothesis, it must be held that the power needed for the work was within the limits of a transcendent consciousness of God. But the view on which I am insisting is not necessarily inconsistent with either hypothesis. For it amounts to this, that—the essence of religion consisting in an endeavour after a practical expression of man's conscious relation to the Infinite—the impulse which begets the endeavour is truly divine, an undeniable form of creative energy; and farther, that this inspiration is to be recognized in the advance from brute stolidity to Fetishism, from Fetishism to symbolic Nature-worship, from Nature-worship to prophetic religions such as Mosaism, and from Mosaism to the higher prophetic religion of Christianity. Now, miraculous powers may, or may not, have intervened at any step in the process. But the decision either way cannot make any difference to the essential significance of religious development. And therefore I hold it no part of my duty here to

discuss the theological dogmas which define supernatural mysteries. Or if it be urged that what the Church generally attributes to Christ is not so much a mission of fresh inspiration, but rather a "finished work" of atonement which has completely altered the relations of a sinful race to the Infinite One; I answer that even according to this view, inasmuch as salvation by Christ was admittedly possible before his advent, the work must be regarded as underlying history, and as in a very true sense "finished before the foundation of the world." Thus the course of development which I have endeavoured to trace might be regarded as resting upon, and indeed carrying out, with the gradual advance characteristic of the progress of creation, the underlying, dateless, and transcendental atonement which neutralizes sin. I do not affect to be here describing my own views; and as little do I deny that there are very real truths involved in such opinions. But it is totally alien from the purpose of the present essay to make any attempt at the elimination of such hypothetical truths from possible errors. The object here is to show that, excluding only the idea of any existing infallible standard of right opinions to be adopted under pain of damnation, the essential nature of religion may be so conceived, as at once to preserve its divine significance and to include every form of opinion under which loyalty to a higher life has ever been manifested.

If, in the remote beginnings of religious life, the

expansiveness of our definition is severely tried by the repulsive corruptions of Fetishism, it may appear to suffer even a greater strain in the attempt to apply it to those glorious embodiments of faith which have illustrated the Christian centuries. And especially the sacred passion of evangelic zeal, which has always marked the brightest ages of the Church's work, may seem at once too vigorously human, and too transcendently divine, to be explained by any tendencies that can be described in words so abstract, or in themselves so cold as "an endeavour after a practical expression of our conscious relation to the Infinite." Still, bearing in mind our assumption of a really divine impulse animating and pervading spiritual progress, it can be no dishonour to Christianity, if we see in its beneficent energies the grandest outcome of the same tendencies which, excited by the wonder of strange forms, awoke in primeval man the first glimmering sense of infinite mystery. For the hearts of all most devout Christians have been stirred, beyond the limits of selfishness or fear, by a strong confidence that all the struggles of the world and all the dark dealings of Providence are controlled or directed by the boundless love declared to mankind in Jesus Christ. "All things are of God," said St. Paul, "who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of recon-

ciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." "Herein is love," said St. John, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Such passages give the key-note of the gospel; and there can be little dispute but that, in forever reiterating this, the "evangelicals" and their spiritual forefathers have kept closest to the real source of Christianity's regenerative power. Earnestness of emotion, by concentrating attention too much on single points, has too often contracted the views of the devoutest men. And this contraction of view has frequently and inevitably resulted in the distortion of the favourite doctrines which have been thus isolated; so that at recurring periods, such names as "Paulician," "Pietist," and "Methodist," have become synonyms for morbid superstition, and objects of undeserved reproach. But still it stands good, that while other schools of religious thought have been moulding the intellectual system, or clipping the extravagant formulas, or adorning the worship of the Church, the evangelicals and their predecessors have, often almost alone, kept the sacred fire burning on the altar. That the fervour, which by a true apostolic succession they have transmitted from age to age, is inseparable from dogmas for ever changing form in their hands, I hold to be an illusion, eventually to be dissipated by the conjunction of an equally fervent faith with a wider knowledge. But

no natural impatience of a blind conservatism, which threatens the survival of religion in any form, ought to obscure the patent fact, that the life of Christianity has always been most vigorously manifested by the fervour of the evangelic spirit. The intense pathos of St. Paul's pleading, the cloudless contemplations of St. John in his divinest moods, the bewildered eloquence of the Letter to Diognetus, which trembles and loses self-control under the weight of glory that oppresses the writer in the love of God, the most jubilant music of Chrysostom's golden tones, the weightiest utterances of Augustine's divine consciousness, the sweet mysticism of Tauler, the indignant protests of Luther, the imaginative joy of the author of "Grace Abounding," the eager pointedness of Wesley's zeal, and all the undying words and works of the noble army of Christ's witnesses—have been constantly inspired, energized, and brightened by the one unfailing source of mystic wonder, that "God so loved the world." It was the feeling that in Christ the true Father's heart came out, it was the clearness, the purity, the simplicity to homeliness, with which the unsearchable mystery of God's nature seemed to take form in Christ, that so fired the souls of the noblest preachers, and wrought with such unfailing effect on the hearts of mankind. But this sense of Divine Love is surely an intense and beautiful form of our conscious relation to the Infinite; and the practical expression of this consciousness, in a life of grateful devotion, has produced the

highest types of character that the Christian world has seen.

Or, if it be insisted that the so-called forensic form of the doctrine of the atonement, often very repulsively presented, has had quite as much to do with spiritual excitement under "gospel preaching," as any exhibition of divine love; still, even this corruption of the original simplicity of the Gospel appealed to the desire to realize, beyond and above all moral standards, a sacred and everlasting sanction which alone makes them venerable. How often have earnest evangelical preachers, with little regard, as usual, to the real meaning of texts, quoted with emphasis the words, that the Lord "will magnify the law and make it honourable." This prophecy they have seen fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ. They have pointed to "the man Christ Jesus" suffering in his very sympathies both with God and man, as a manifestation of the dread burden which the sin of others is to a holy nature. And some of the more mystical of such preachers have pointed to the cross of Christ, as a figure of God's patient endurance beneath the injustice and wrong, which human rebellion had done to His mercy and goodness. With such a form of doctrine there can be no difficulty. Here is man's consciousness of relationship to the Infinite, taking form in a beautiful and touching expression of the divine grounds of righteousness. And even where intellectual confusion, coarseness of feeling, and false analogy have

combined to form a conception of that sacrifice more worthy of Fetishism than of Christianity; still, in the representation of guilt condemned and law secured by a supernatural divine economy, there has been manifest a craving desire to see the authoritative claims of religion and morality based on our relation to supreme and unswerving justice.

By this brief illustrative review I have endeavoured to show that there underlies all religions, whether in our opinion they are true or false, the same essential idea. Each is an endeavour after a practical expression of man's conscious relation to the Infinite. This consciousness, as we have seen in the essay on the Philosophy of Ignorance, is necessarily given when man comes to such a stage of maturity that the fragmentariness of his creature life is contrasted with the immeasurable All which is the "complement of the Ego." Like every other form of human consciousness, it in all probability arose through a long course of slow development. And even in its utmost maturity it does not constitute religion. The essence of religion is the impulse to interpret that relationship as involving humility, submission, aspiration, and loyalty to the recognised laws of a Power that is altogether beyond self-will. That impulse I recognise as truly divine, the vital essence of every form of sacred inspiration. Again, by the description "truly divine," I mean that it is a real and undying element in the inscrutable power which is the efficient cause of

evolution. It is no misinterpretation or corruption arising from a misunderstanding of the universe by self-conceit. It is no mere negation of a comprehensive and adequate conception of the universe. It is a normal and positive manifestation inwardly, to our consciousness, of the Power in whom all things consist, and of whose infinite modes the changes, which constitute evolution, are the exhibition in phenomenal succession. If it be asked how I have the confidence to affirm this, I appeal to no authoritative documents, and to no miraculous attestations, save those which are written in the heart, and which guarantee, by a mysterious but all-sufficient authority, the principles lying at the basis of all practicable life. As we obey the predisposition to find in the testimony of the senses an external world, although its externality cannot be proved; as we confidently act on the predisposition to realize in cause and effect more than mere succession, and to augur the future from the past, without the slightest justification by syllogism; so a genuine loyalty of soul teaches obedience to the predisposition that inclines us to recognise in an impulse pervading all the progress of mankind, and animating our own noblest life, the veritable, inward, and spiritual working of everlasting Power. This impulse drives us to find some practical expression, either spiritual in religious virtues, or intellectual in religious philosophy, or symbolic in religious worship, of the indefeasible consciousness of relation to God. And in such an endeavour we find the essential nature of religion.

The question, however, here arises, whether on the views thus advocated the truth or falsehood of religious teaching is of any importance at all; and especially in what sense, if any, Christianity may be regarded as a religion of saving truth. How, it may be asked, is it possible that the most impressive doctrines of evangelical religion should affect the heart, apart from a strong and even stern conviction of their historical revelation and binding authority? In answer to such questions we must try to determine what it is in the most impressive doctrines which has given them their special power. If the vital essence of their energy consists in any outward event, or in the precise form of any intellectual dogma; then the intellectual insinuation would be unanswerable, that religion must stand or fall with the balance of historical evidence, or of ecclesiastical authority. But such a thing is simply inconceivable. No historical event can possibly affect the heart, save in so far as it conveys or strikingly suggests spiritual principles. The dread and glorious consummation of Calvary itself could have no lesson for the heart, and no regeneration for the soul, except when regarded as embodying and enforcing the horror of sin, the regenerative might of self-sacrifice, and the endurance of divine patience. When, therefore, we would estimate the truth or falsehood of religious teaching, it is not so much its testimony to outward facts with which we have to do, but rather the principles which it infers. It may, or may

not, be true that Christ had the power of opening the eyes of the blind; but the only religious element in the question is the use which is made of such miracles to instruct the modern Church. If, for instance, the lesson be drawn that an intense consciousness of God gives the power of illumining blind souls with the perception of a divine significance such as they had never hitherto found in life, the instruction remains true, whatever may be the character of the events that suggested it. If it should be rejoined that upon the reality of Christ's miracles must depend the belief in his supernatural being, the answer is plain; that this supernatural being could not possibly be of any spiritual advantage to the world, save in so far as it conveyed or suggested spiritual influence. For instance, if the lesson be that the supernatural being of Christ shows the love of God to men in sending one so great to be their Saviour, the stimulating power here lies, not in the theological dogma, but in the thought that is suggested. Now, any thought suggested concerning the Infinite God cannot be dependent for its essential truth on this or that event which brings it home to men. And it is at least conceivable, that a larger knowledge of the universe, and a more intense realisation of present inspiration from on high might take up, and maintain in all its fulness, that sense of Divine Love, which once needed a supernatural vision to excite it. Of course the fact of God's "unspeakable gift" to men, however it may be interpreted, remains

an indestructible element, or rather vital centre, in any rational conception of history. But so far as religion is a present thing, its emotions and its energies ought to be their own witness, apart from any historical criticism of the modes in which they were suggested. In effect, what we ought to mean by the truth or falsehood of Christianity is not the reality or otherwise of any events which are associated with its rise; but rather the adequacy of the ideas it gives, of the feelings it inspires, and of the life it teaches, to give expression in the present day to our conscious relation to God. These remarks are not to be interpreted as necessarily involving any opinion one way or the other, on special, historical, or theological questions. Not that I would hesitate to give my own opinions were they relevant. But the essence of my position here is that they are not relevant. With the single exception, which we are compelled to make, of the opinion that there is any infallible standard, binding to intellectual obedience on pain of perdition, the most various and opposite views of Christian history may be entertained by those who agree in the idea here given of the essential nature of religion. Thus it is quite possible that a man, while acknowledging religious life to be a present energy of the soul, roused not by historical memory, but by the spiritual suggestions associated therewith, may yet be firmly convinced that the present inspiration never could have existed apart from a mysterious divine Incarnation and a supernatural ministry. He there-

fore asserts and maintains the all but literal accuracy of the New Testament narratives; while at the same time he owns that if the result, with a view to which miraculous deeds were wrought, are actually attained in the soul of his friend, it matters but little that the opinions of this latter concerning the events in question are directly opposed to his own. Such a position is at least perfectly intelligible and consistent. For it is not only conceivable,—it is an actual fact, that persistent spiritual influences have had their origin in events, the memory of which, owing to the absence of adequate records, has afterwards become hopelessly obscured. And if, at any crisis in history, miraculous attestations of supernatural power were necessary for the next step in the development of spiritual life, it is not at all an impossible supposition, that, while the spiritual influence flowed on like an unfailing river, the historical source might become clouded with obscurity. In such a case, opposite opinions on the historical question might well be possible to minds equally candid, and equally appreciative of the divine life that is the substantial result. This is a view which is indeed not often, if ever, actually avowed by those who magnify the import of the supernatural elements in Christianity; but it is nevertheless practically adopted by all who, while holding firmly to their own orthodox opinions, hesitate to prophesy the perdition of a sincere and upright opponent. On the other hand, it is equally possible that inability to

adopt the ordinary theory of Christian origins may be associated with all the spiritual affections which alone give to those historical opinions significance and value; with the spirit of reverence and aspiration; with brave faith in Divine Love; with the consciousness of divine communion. It is true that this position likewise is too uncommon. The vehement insistance of religious people on the inseparable connection between the letter and the spirit, with their incessant denunciations, often loud and bitter, of any free handling supposed to threaten the foundations, have reacted upon all free thinkers so as to create a prejudice against the spiritual principles and devout emotions thus represented as absolutely inseparable from irrational bigotry. But when the present time of conflict shall have passed, and when a generation more familiar with scientific and critical results is enabled more calmly to consider the whole question, the deep spiritual needs of man will again assert their claims,—the keen force of aspiration after God will be revived; and whatever may be the view ultimately taken as to the historical character of Christian origins, the ideal, which as a matter of fact has been engendered, of the Divine Humanity, and of the kingdom of God on earth, will again be cherished as the precious heir-loom of a mysterious but creative age. If a man does but feel that God is in him and with him now; if he knows by experience that prayer, as an act of divine communion, opens an unfailing

fountain of refreshment, solace, and strength; if that larger and blessed life which is for ever pressing from the realms of the infinite into his narrow soul, appears always in the form of the grand Being who made the cross a throne; what does it matter that the audible voice on Sinai melts into the echoes of earnest human thoughts? What is it to him that the fire which answered Elijah's prayer has become the mythic symbol of the fire for ever burning on the altar of his heart? Or even if the assertion of a unique and inconceivable miracle, embodied in the person of Christ, should appear to be the expression of emotions that struggled for utterance, rather than the record of historic fact, he has, in the form assumed by the divine Spirit in all inward communion, the true reality underlying the promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The truth of religion must be spiritual; must concern the adequacy of its expression of our conscious relation to the Infinite. And whatever part historical events may have played in making a more adequate expression possible, the power of the higher spiritual consciousness awakened ought not to be, and ultimately cannot be, dependent on the opinions held about the questions of history involved.

From another side the objection might be urged, that the views of religion here suggested make it nothing more than a kind of mystic morality. And, in as far as the foundations of morality must ultimately be found, not in the utilitarianism, which can at best

give only the *standard;* but in that loyal subordination to Infinite Power, which alone suggests an adequate *sanction,* there would be some truth in the assertion. But, instead of being an objection, it would rather amount to a confirmation of the theory advanced. For every one, who believes in the necessity of religion at all, must allow that while different in its exercises and in its ultimate outlook, morality is in the last result intimately entwined with the very roots of religion. Still, for all practical purposes, morality and religion represent very different conceptions. For morality deals with our relations to mankind or to other living things, as, equally with ourselves, fragmentary manifestations of universal Power; and by the force of traditional custom we may observe certain rules for our conduct in such relations, without ever raising the question in our own minds as to the sanction on which all such rules must ultimately rest. But when once that question is raised, it is impossible to give any permanently satisfactory answer without an appeal to religion. For as morality deals with our relations to other creature life, religion rests in our sense of that universal and eternal Life of which we ourselves and all others are fragmentary manifestations. As a practical expression of this consciousness, religion demands the subordination of self, not so much to the particular interests of this or that individual, but rather to what we call the plan or purpose which is manifested to us in evolution, and interpreted by an irrepressible pre-

disposition as the energy of an eternal Life. Here, and here alone, is an adequate sanction for the "ought" which pervades all particular rules of morality. To tell a man that self-sacrifice is glorious or beautiful may be a very pretty sentiment; yet it affords no strong ground for command. But any emotional recognition of the truth that he lives, moves, and has his being in an Infinite Life, no one of whose manifestations exists for its own particular self, but each for all, must bring with it the feeling of loyal obligation underlying all devotion to duty. The view of religion therefore as an endeavour after an adequate expression of our conscious relation to the Infinite would seem to explain both the original unity and the practical divergence of morality and religion. Religion gives the sense of rightful subordination to the divine reign manifest alike in universal order, and in the inward consciousness of creative and inspiring Life. But this consciousness cannot of itself give any distinct notion of the manner in which that subordination should be shown in our relation to other creatures. For this latter purpose we need principles and rules elaborated in the course of experience; and which, becoming matters of custom or habit, are often obeyed without any reference to their original sanction. Thus morality becomes separated, in conception at least, from religion; a dangerous course, which can never long be continued with safety. On the other hand the contemplative mind, dwelling upon its conscious relation to

infinite Power, loves to find utterance for its emotions in spiritual reverie or acts of worship, which too often receive no practical interpretation in daily life. Thus religion becomes separated from morality; a course, if possible, more dangerous than the other. But a true idea of religion, while making morality independent of any alleged infallible laws written and graven in stone, inspires it at the same time with a power of growth in accordance with man's increased knowledge of the laws of the universe. And farther, such an idea of religion, by pointing to a sanction of morality deeply seated in the constitution of human nature, lessens the temptation to sever even in thought two beneficent and ennobling influences, never to be separated one from another without a speedy loss of vital power.

For the completion of the subject it now only remains, first to show the relation of dogma and of faith to the ideas here propounded; and then to make some suggestions as to the future of religion when such ideas begin to be generally adopted. Dogma, meaning literally that which seems good to, or has been decreed by, a sufficient authority, is ecclesiastically applied to those formal expressions of opinion which have been approved either by the Catholic Church, or by its divergent sects. Such, for instance, is the opinion concerning the incarnation embodied in the Athanasian Creed, or in "The Westminster Confession of Faith." Such also is the doctrine of Atonement contained in

the Second Article, which describes the Sacrifice of Christ as intended to "reconcile His Father to us." These instances are sufficient to illustrate, what indeed no one will dispute, that religious dogma means a formal and to a certain extent authoritative expression of opinion on some point of man's relation to the Infinite. Dogma tells us that God and man are reconciled in Christ. Various dogmas give inconsistent explanations as to the manner in which this was effected. Dogma offers a decided opinion as to the personal being and ontological essence of that inspiring Power, which, as a matter of fact, is realized in all the highest moments of individual life or of history. Thus dogma belongs to philosophy or metaphysics rather than to religion properly so called. It is an *intellectual* explanation of that consciousness which finds *practical* expression in religious life. But since, as we have seen, the very essence of that consciousness lies in a sense of relation to the Infinite, which is in its true being unknowable, and therefore beyond all power of expression, dogma must always be utterly inadequate as an explanation of the religious life. It does not follow at all that religion is impossible; but only that dogma, whatever be its uses, should never be confounded with it. An endeavour after a *practical* expression of our conscious relation to the Infinite produces emotions, aspirations, loyalty of soul and deeds of sacrifice, the very virtue of which consists in a feeling of their utter inadequacy to realize "the glory

that excelleth." There is no attempt here to define that which is illimitable, or to push the arrogance of thought beyond the bounds of the knowable. There is only the inextinguishable faith, that true life is a gradual awakening towards the realization of a goodness that outstretches all the yearning of human love, and of a total perfectness that is always beyond the horizon of contemplation. Hence true religion is innocent of fanatic confidence, and is guiltless of the impiety which would set dogmatic bounds to Infinite Being. On the other hand dogma, being an effort to give intellectual expression to some phase of the Infinite, so as apparently to explain and account for particular religious affections, may for a while give intensity to those affections by a seeming definition of their object. But after a time, by putting a ban upon their restless yearning after an ever-expanding glory, it uniformly tends to diminish their vitality, or to pervert their direction. That dogma has its uses it would be absurd to deny. But the experience of many centuries teaches us that it is at the best an imperfect expression of man's ever-growing consciousness of God. And the conditions needed for its rightful use are, first of all a deep feeling of its tentative imperfection; and next the courageous freedom of thought, which makes dogma to grow out of religious life, rather than religious life out of dogma. In fine, if the essential nature of religion is the practical activity of our conscious relation to the Infinite, dogma is the for ever imperfect

form under which that relationship is intellectually conceived. How far then the ancient dogmas of the Church may need remodelling before they are fitted to express the religious life of the present age, I shall not attempt here to decide in detail. But no one, except those who cling to the now impossible dogma of infallibility, will for a moment deny that the stupendous enlargement of man's ideas of the physical universe must inevitably require some corresponding expansion in his notions of that Infinite Power, whose phenomenal glory dazzles his mind and enthralls his heart.

No error has been more fatal to the simplicity and spirituality of religion, than the inveterate confusion of thought, which has to so large an extent identified *faith* with *opinion*. It was this confusion that generated the fierce, intolerant spirit too often exhibited in the controversial writings of even the noblest among the Fathers of the Church. It was this which incited Christians in their prosperity to take up, and wield with even yet more pitiless vigour, the weapons of persecution dropped from the paralyzed grasp of their heathen opponents. It was this which made the work of the inquisitor a sacred office, and commissioned him to save the souls of the many by visiting with horrible tortures the mental independence of the few. It is this which has retarded the progress of inquiry, which has set a ban on science, and for long centuries has committed the keys of knowledge to a stolidly self-

sufficient priesthood. It is this same confusion which, even at the present day, engenders all the inconsistencies, the hollow professions of candour on the lips, masking a slavish terror in the soul, which too often characterize the attitude of popular religion in its bearing toward science. It is impossible to deny that the innocent source of this confusion lies in the New Testament itself. The apostolic writers, consumed with noble zeal for the swift achievement of great moral aims, could not be expected to pause for metaphysical distinctions. And even had they been willing to do so, their employment of an alien language, to embody ideas and feelings which had ripened under Hebrew forms, threw unusual difficulties in their way. A Hebrew root, which, though capable of intellectual applications, lends itself far more easily to moral associations, was translated by various derivatives of a Greek root, which, though susceptible to indirect moral suggestions, was essentially intellectual in its central significance.* The first notion of the Hebrew

* אָמַן according to Gesenius (Thesaurus &c.) means originally and properly "fulcivit, sustentavit; hinc אֹמְנָה columna &c." Hence in its intransitive form it is equivalent to "firmus, inconcussus fuit; talisque quo tuto aliquis inniti possit; metaph. fidus fuit." Under the Hiphil form we get with appropriate quotations 1. innixus est rei, 2. pro fido et tuto habuit, fidem habuit alicui, confisus est, 3. credidit.

In accordance with this view of the root, we get under the noun אֱמוּנָה, which is the Old Testament word for faith, 1. firmitas, 2. securitas, 3. fides, qua quis promissa præstat et exsequitur. This is sufficient to sustain the remarks made in the text.

root, according to Gesenius, is that of firm support; and this leads naturally to the idea of trustiness, steadfastness, loyalty. Or in other forms it is applied to the recognition of that character in others. Thus when the Psalmist laments that "the *faithful* fail from among the children of men," or expresses his confidence that "the Lord preserveth the *faithful*," the epithet he uses suggests no adherence to any opinions, —orthodox or heterodox—but, as indeed the English word most accurately indicates, that trustworthiness or loyalty of soul, from which we may confidently expect integrity and uprightness of dealing. So also when the prophet Habakkuk declares that "the just shall live by his faith," he speaks not of any opinion, but of that steadfast continuity of moral purpose which waits in humble acquiescence upon the purposes of God. On the other hand, when it is said of Abraham that "he believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness," the derivative form here used signified that Abraham recognized the faithfulness of God, and confidently reckoned on the fulfilment of His promise. Here again, although it may justly be said that there is at least an implied opinion about the being of God, it is not the opinion, but the moral element of steadfast loyalty to the nature of God, which is represented as winning the divine approval. At any rate, this is, as we shall presently see, St. Paul's interpretation of the passage. Of course the same Hebrew root is applied also to describe a confident

persuasion which may be purely intellectual. But it is obvious, from these illustrations, that the first and most natural suggestion of its originally physical significance is one, not of intellectual opinions, but of moral affections.

Now, when we turn to the Greek root * and its derivatives, the order and connection of ideas seem to be a little different. Here the first idea, so far at least as Greek usage is concerned, is that of persuasion by "talking over;" and this is most naturally associated with the enforcement of opinion by argument. But a man who is really persuaded, has confidence, and is steadfast in his purpose. Hence a derivative verb expresses belief, and a derivative noun and adjective faithfulness. This coincidence, of a general similarity of meaning with a divergent suggestiveness, goes far to explain the use, which is made in the New Testament, of the nearest equivalents that could be

* Of course roots, properly so-called, do not lie on the surface in Greek, as they do, at least conventionally, in Hebrew. But, taking πείθω as the primary verb with which πίστις πιστεύω, &c., are connected as secondary formations, we find in Liddel and Scott, that the former is interpreted as meaning "to prevail upon, win over by any fair means, especially by words, to talk over, to persuade." In the passive, of course, the word means to be persuaded by a person, to yield to him. Thus the original force is clearly intellectual. πιστεύω, and still more πίστις, has more of moral significance, and indeed in the latter it is predominant almost to the extent of exclusiveness. But in the verb πιστεύω there is very much more of merely intellectual opinion than in הֶאֱמִין.

found for the Hebrew notion of faith. For while it can be distinctly shown that the element which, in the view of St. Paul, and perhaps of the Evangelists, gave all its spiritual value to faith, is a moral affection; it is undeniable that this moral affection was treated as practically inseparable from the adoption of certain religious opinions. The "locus classicus" on this subject is that passage in the Epistle to the Romans,* where St. Paul describes the faith of Abraham. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

It is evident that here the Apostle is endeavouring to account for the apparent anomaly of a faith reckoned as righteousness, by describing the former as an essentially moral affection,—the root of all other virtues. Abraham was firm and fearless because of his loyalty to God; but this quality is the very life and soul of righteousness. Nay, so distinctly is faith a moral attribute in the view of this Apostle, that he does not hesitate to ascribe it to the Most High. "What if some did not believe?" † he asks; "shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?" Now "the faith of God" can here be nothing else than divine loyalty to the ancient covenant; and into such a conception, of course, no element of opinion can

* Romans iv. 18-22. † Romans iii. 3.

intrude. So, too, when St. Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," * it seems impossible to doubt that, in his idea, faith must have been as purely moral an affection as any of those with which it is associated. A similar reflection occurs when we read in the Gospels how Christ rebuked those who payed "tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, but omitted the weightier matters of the law,—judgment, mercy and faith." † And when the Saviour, in foresight of Peter's temptation to treachery, says to him "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," ‡ we feel that the word can have little if any theological content, and must be taken as equivalent to faithfulness, or loyalty of soul.

It is however undeniable that the more intellectual idea of faith, suggested by Greek terms, did likewise pervade the teaching of St. Paul, and doubtless of most, if not of all the primitive preachers. The references made to the fate of those to whom "the gospel was hid," § or to whom the Apostle was "a savour of death unto death," ‖ make it difficult for us to imagine that St. Paul could have hoped for the salvation of any heathen hearers who, however sincerely, rejected the opinions which he taught about the mission of Christ to the world. Still less can we suppose that St. John would have allowed the innocence of any,

* Galatians v. 22. † Matthew xxiii. 23. ‡ Luke xxii. 32.
§ 2 Corinthians iv. 3. ‖ 2 Corinthians ii. 16.

however otherwise virtuous, who refused to adopt the belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and had come in ordinary human flesh.* But yet there is sufficient evidence in such passages as those above quoted, and indeed in the whole tone of the New Testament, that, whatever might be the inseparable associations of the word, the vital element, the nucleus of all regenerative power in the primitive Christian idea of faith, was not any opinion however sacred; but a moral affection, which we best describe as loyalty of soul. And indeed, St. James'† impatience of the associations which had grown up around the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew description of faithful obedience, would seem to be a curious confirmation of the views here suggested. "The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" was to this writer an equivalent expression for obedience to "the perfect law of liberty." But when he found that there were those who expected salvation because their monotheistic opinions contrasted favourably with the idolatrous systems of the heathen, he could not withhold the scathing rebuke,—"Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well. *The devils also believe, and tremble.*"‡

We shall not be far wrong, then, if we assert that the essential significance of primitive Christian faith was a loyalty of soul to that ideal of humanity—or, better still, to that expression of the relations of God and man, which was set forth in Jesus Christ. But

* 1 John ii. 22. † Ep. of James ii. 14. ‡ Chapter ii. 19.

farther, as St. Paul attributed the glory of Abraham to his faith, and as he seems to have conceived of unillumined heathen who were "a law unto themselves," we may fairly generalize the New Testament idea of faith, so far as to consider it definable, as an inward loyalty to the best ideal known. And if so, the relation of faith to the essential nature of religion is clear. For an endeavour after a practical expression of our conscious relation to the Infinite is naturally shown, first in the courage which obeys predispositions, whose authority cannot be proved by sight; and next in outward obedience to the ideals, which such predispositions recognize as approximations to infinite goodness. When Saul of Tarsus "kicked against the pricks," he was resisting predispositions implanted and sustained by the Spirit of God, and which had been roused to an agony of suppressed desire by the reflection of Christ's glory beaming from Stephen's heroic face. He began to feel, but would not for a while acknowledge, that the crucified Jesus was a diviner ideal than he had ever known. Prejudice, sectarian pride, social ambition, all fought against the confession; and so long as he withheld it he was faithless, through disloyalty of soul. But the vision and the voice bore down his stubborn will; and the words of meek submission, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" were the beginning of the obedience of faith.

In this view faith, while equally sincere, may be

capable of a thousand varieties, according to the circumstances, opportunities, and mental or spiritual capacities of individual men. And as it is not opinion that saves, but the sacred loyalty which is only another word for reconciliation to God, we should be prepared to recognize "like precious faith" in every unselfish surrender of life to the sway of a higher law, however it may be revealed. "It is of sin that we do not love that which is best."* In those words lies the whole doctrine of faith. For "what is best" is ever the infinite perfection of God, breaking upon us in a myriad phases, all having their special attraction for individual affinities. Or if there be, as undoubtedly there are, some broad gleams of the Supreme Goodness such as draw all eyes away from lesser lights; these great outshinings of the divine glory are themselves refracted into "broken lights" which have their sects and their day. Their separate adorers dispute and wrangle, each mistaking a part for the whole; while, if they did but know it, all alike possess a faith that might "work by love." For as it must be held that all rules of morality are finally embraced under one ultimate sanction, so the subjective root of every variety of human obedience is the one susceptibility, which feels the charm and the awe of that sanction under all particular forms; and this susceptibility is only another word for faith.

* Boethius, quoted in the *Theologia Germanica*.

Our conclusion then is, that much of the distracting anxiety, arising at the present day from unsettlement of religious opinion, is caused by an insufficient idea of what religion is in its own essential nature. Whereas, when once that essential nature is realized, it is felt to be indestructible. For it is distinctive of man, that in his thoughts and in his emotions he must ever feel after the unity and totality of being. In vain Materialism fixes its microscope, and invites us to see in cells or molecular atoms the ultimate reality of existence. For the wondering mind sees in them only depth beyond depth of an unfathomable mystery. In vain Positivism denies all recognition of aught but what can be analyzed, or measured, or weighed. The tendency to see beyond all moral laws an eternal sanction, and to find beneath the vision of the world an all-comprehensive Life, is as irrepressible, and surely as true to the significance of the universe, as the craving of the eye for colour, or of the ear for beautiful sounds. It may be feared indeed, by those who think timidly of the future, that the break-up of old forms, for which no precisely equivalent substitute can be found, must inevitably be followed by the weakness of conviction, so constantly associated with vagueness of definition. But such gloomy prophets forget, that much of the distinctness, which they attribute to their own religious forms, consists far more in familiarity of language than in definiteness of thought. Do they dare to frame to themselves any semblance of

the transcendent Majesty they worship? Do they know what they mean when they speak, for instance, of guarding against "dividing the substance or confounding the persons" of Deity? Does any effort of imagination enable them to make real to themselves the enshrining of a distinct Divine Person in the babe of Bethlehem? The *words* which propound the religious dogmas referred to, are familiar, and confidently used, giving a false impression of an intellectual distinctness which has no real existence. It is long habit; it is the reception, through well-worn channels, of the inspiring emotions that come from a sense of our nearness to God; this, and no distinctness of conception about supernatural being it is, which makes old forms so beautiful and dear. But change of form, though it may sometimes disturb us, by revealing the vagueness which it by no means creates, does at the same time, by the very shock it gives, arouse us to a feeling of reality far deeper than we had before. It is even conceivable, that the cessation of reliance on authoritative forms may compel us to feel out for ourselves towards the Divine Life in which we live and move. And no devout soul can well regret the substantial conclusion of the whole matter, which would seem to be, that God never was more vividly manifest to any generation of our fathers than He is to us. Strange sights they may have seen; but never to them was there unfolded the illimitable vastness of the heavens, or the deeper mystery of organic life.

They saw, as we may verily believe, in strange unaccountable vision, the beauty and the power of the risen Christ; but upon our eyes, in a new humanity that rises from the grave of the past, God Himself dawns, if not in such mysterious portents, yet with a wide-shining and self-evident splendour, which gathers up the whole progress of revelation.

V.

CHRISTIAN PANTHEISM.

V.

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If, in the preceding essays, the signs of the times have been in the main rightly, however imperfectly interpreted, they indicate undoubtedly the movement of religious thought towards some form of pantheism. And therefore the question, how far that movement of thought may seem to be consistent with the survival of Christianity as the highest expression of the divine life in man, forms the most appropriate theme for final discussion. My own opinion is embodied in the title which I have ventured to prefix to this concluding essay. At the same time, I cannot conceal from myself that to many this title will appear simply a contradiction in terms, or at best only a perverse paradox. It will seem to them that the notion of Christian polytheism would be just as rational as that of Christian Pantheism; or that the announcement of such a theme is as mere a conceit, as it would be to take for a subject impersonal individuality, or living death. For Christianity, which was at first the triumphant power of a

spirit taking form in Jesus Christ, came, by a very natural process, to be identified with a system of distinct dogma concerning the ontological mystery of God. And though in recent times considerable laxity has been generally allowed in the interpretation of dogma, yet it is very commonly supposed that pantheism, almost equally with atheism, subverts that fundamental consciousness of our relation to the Infinite, on which all Christian thought and feeling must ultimately rest. Still, no fear of the scorn which may be poured upon language, supposed to be obviously non-natural in meaning, shall deter me from declaring, that I see no future for the old religious life of apostles and prophets, except in the direction of what cannot be honestly or adequately described otherwise than as Christian Pantheism. To disguise the pantheism would be to fail in honesty. To give up the Christian name would not only be disloyalty to profound convictions, but it would be altogether inconsistent with any adequate description of the spiritual future which seems to lie before us. For whatever may be the case with ontological speculations natural to the Christian era, and specially fostered by the Alexandrian influences which so powerfully affected the intellectual forms of early Church doctrine, the spirit of Christianity is immortal. Nor is this the language of vague and evanescent sentiment. For the apparent definiteness of theological creeds is not so much the result of deliberately elaborated system, as it is produced by the reflex action of intense

spiritual feeling, which first projected the causes of emotion in an imaginative form, and then, in times of declension, sought renewal by an anxious insistance on the definite reality and all-sufficient adequacy of the objects thus created. The real growth of Christianity was not from philosophy or theology to spiritual life; but rather from the energy of emotions intoxicated with a power and life and love surpassing imagination, and therefore outranging all definite statement, to the elaboration of an intellectual system apparently adequate to explain this glorious consciousness. The "fulness of Him that filleth all in all," "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," the longing to be "filled to all the fulness of God," the adoration of "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," "dwelling in light that is unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see," were not the expressions of metaphysically definite opinions about divine ontology; but rather of the emotions of an unutterable consciousness seeking definition and finding none. Certainly then, if we look back to the primitive Christian age as the creative era from which we date the noblest religious life of man, we should be faithless to our own most cherished traditions, were we to allow, that the power of spiritual emotions is necessarily dependent upon the definiteness and continuance of a metaphysical creed. It is therefore, I repeat, no merely vague or unreal sentiment, if we maintain that, notwithstanding all changes in ontological theory,—or rather notwithstanding the sub-

version of all ontological theories, except such as may be consistent with a true philosophy of ignorance, the spirit of Christianity is immortal. For St. Paul declared this to be "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." It is the spirit of reverence, which owns in silent worship the transcendent reality of the Power that pervades, and actuates, and wields the totality of things. It is the sense of calm strength gained by loyal trust in the self-consistent measureless Might, which grasps at once the beginning and the end, and makes all things work together for good. It is the spirit of happy trustfulness, that feels at the heart of the universe an unspeakable beneficence, of which all human love is but a faint and trembling ray. It is that spirit of charity, which in the little round of daily life reflects the all-harmonizing goodness of the Infinite. It is moreover the spirit of courage, which faces the facts as they are, and will not distort them for any theoretic ends. It is the spirit of self-control, which knows the bounds imposed on human knowledge as on human action; which will not fret itself with idle ambitions that border on impious rebellion. And this "spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" alone can cope with the sickly doubts, and blinding mists, and hideous dreams, which threaten the spiritual future of humanity with dire eclipse.

I believe then that the contradiction, supposed to be involved in the title of this essay, is totally imaginary. The paradox, like all paradoxes, is only

apparent; and in this instance the appearance arises, not from anything in the essential nature of the two things combined, but in unsupported and unreal conceptions about them both. At any rate the possibility of a Christian Pantheism is an issue fairly raised, not only by the speculative tendencies of modern philosophy, but also, and far more forcibly, by the enormous expansion of scientific generalizations, which have not only enlarged, but have in some respects revolutionized, our ideas of the universe. An issue thus raised and enforced cannot be met by the treatment appropriate to moral corruption or arrogant self-will. And those who denounce as infidel or impious any attempt to estimate candidly the probabilities which seem suggested by the signs of the times, would do well to reconsider the resistless strength of the influences that force the subject upon our attention.

A somewhat poor joke of a great satirical philosopher had at least the merit of announcing the advent of a time when mere names would cease to frighten, if found expressive of actual facts. What the opinions were which called forth Sterling's rebuke of "flat pantheism" we are not told; but the rejoinder, that it might be "pot-theism" for all the philosopher cared, was at any rate true to the growing fearlessness of an age, which insists upon knowing precisely how much or how little can be authoritatively alleged concerning our conscious relation to the Infinite, no matter what may be the name which is threatened for the religion of

the future. And it may fairly be questioned whether, in any thoughtful society, the spiritual outlook of the present time is ever earnestly discussed without an ominous gravitation of interest to the subject of pantheism. The religious discussions also, which form so novel and striking a feature in recent periodical literature, seem to point plainly in the same direction; although, for the most part, names which might excite prejudice are eschewed. The ideas and principles whose influence has brought about this result, have already, for other purposes, received our attention in the preceding essays. But it seems needful to recur to them again, in order to show more distinctly their bearing upon the question at issue. One of these is a growing intolerance of the old meaning attached to the word *creation*. It is perfectly clear, that either God has made something out of nothing, or some form of pantheism is inevitable. The only other hypothesis, which is the eternal duality of matter and spirit, is of course dead beyond all possibility of revival. The recognition of the above alternative is nothing new; neither is the idea of the world's evolution out of God at all foreign to Christian thought. But what *is* new is the extent to which this issue presses itself upon public, we might almost say upon popular, attention. And besides, the kind of mental activity excited by the marvellous successes of science, as well as by increasing familiarity with its methods, makes very difficult, if not impossible for us, the mild

religious mysticism, which dreamed of emanation from God after the manner of a ray from a candle, without any uneasiness at all about the relation of such dreams to the crystallized asperities of metaphysical theology.

If we say that in these times the necessity is increasingly felt for consistency between our various strains of thought about the world and life—it is not meant that any one now hopes for a complete and adequate conception of the universe; but rather, that the ideas we cherish must harmoniously combine to form one germinal notion, capable of equal and congruous expansion in all directions, in accordance with the advance of knowledge. We cannot now, for instance, conceive of the origin of man from God as essentially and incommensurably different in mode from that of the outward creation. The effort to do so involves us in continually complicated and increasingly painful discords of thought and feeling, in proportion as the irrefragable evidence of creation's record mingles the origins of man with those of all organic life. Nor can we treat vital force as fundamentally and finally different from material force in its relation to the infinite divine energy, without falling into the danger of a similar distraction. We may still say of the Almighty, that "we are His offspring;" and may still recognize in the consciousness which thinks and says this, a phenomenon manifesting more of the fulness of God than any apparently mechanical operations of nature. But, to insist that the difference is precisely

of the same character as that which distinguishes a man's handiwork from the children of his body, is to adopt an analogy, which our present knowledge of the connection between human history and physical evolution makes manifestly untenable and false. We cannot, then, adopt the expedient of making the human spirit the breath of God, while every material thing is supposed to be the result of a creative fiat. We cannot hold that personal being alone is real, and everything else "the baseless fabric of a vision." For, to say nothing of the arguments advanced on this subject in a previous essay, it is impossible on such a view to give any rational significance to the indubitable indications, which would mingle all known forms of personal being, and all material phenomena, in one common origin. Now, what was that common origin? If it be said that we do not know,—the answer, as against ordinary theological systems, is final and destructive. If, on the other hand, it is said we know, on the authority of an infallible revelation, that this origin was a fiat, by which Omnipotence made all things out of nothing,—a Babel of voices dins into our ears a thousand difficulties, which mar with irritating and endless controversy our contemplations of eternal order. The vehicles of that revelation, whether Church or Book, are challenged on every side. Nor is any intelligent man now willing to assert the existence of infallibility, in any definite form which can be brought to the test, or without such limitations as practically neutralize its authority.

The question then becomes one of confessedly conflicting evidence, liable to all the absurd issues, which, in the last essay, we have seen to involve a perpetual confusion between faith and opinion. And, indeed, were it not that custom blunts our finest feelings, we should recognize as monstrous the supposition that Infinite Wisdom should have undertaken to guarantee to us a knowledge unattainable by our own proper faculties, and should then have left the possession of that knowledge dependent after all on the exercise of our faculties in the judgment of conflicting evidence. For not only—as we have seen—are the events supposed to guarantee revelation obviously open to the sincerest doubt, but the whole Bible does not contain any single clear and decided utterance on the matter here in question.* To say, then, that we know by revelation the origin of all things, is either to use words without meaning, or to push personal opinion to the verge of arrogance. A man may *think* he knows by revelation the origin of all things; but the grounds of his opinion are so purely personal, and so lacking in all the characteristics of a generic tendency of mankind, that the adoption of this view as the basis of a universal religion is simply inconceivable.

But though the confession, that concerning the origin of all things, viewed historically, we are entirely

* It is perhaps needless to remind the reader, that there is no ground whatever for the assertion, that בְּרֵאשִׁית, Gen. i. 1, involves the metaphysical idea of creation out of nothing.

ignorant, is fatal to any theology requiring belief in a creation out of nothing, such a confession is by no means destructive to religion. For the essential nature of this, resting in a present consciousness of our relation to the Infinite, by no means necessarily involves any historical opinion at all. This indefeasible consciousness needs no dream of a primeval and momentary fiat, to impress upon it the recognition of an all-sufficient and all-embracing Power. It feels out through all phenomena to an underlying substance in which they all consist. It recognises, if dimly, yet with eager emotion, a oneness of things, inspiring the thought of a totality of power. And though such indefinite glories are insufficient in themselves to form a practical religion, yet they are always present in that communion with God, which gives to all practical religion its life. But what I now wish to insist upon is this,—that such a consciousness of relation to the Infinite is entirely consistent with all the generalizations which mingle, in one common germ of evolution, the origins of man and of the world. Nor is any decision of the historical question, as to the mode of origination, at all necessary to its satisfaction. For aught it cares, the whole universe may have been from everlasting as now it is, with only such rippling cycles of everywhere compensated change as produce on us the effect of evolution, while the whole is for ever one and the same. Such a consciousness therefore will not endeavour to evolve out of its depths an answer

to the historical question, what *was* the origin of all things. It only feels that *now* all things are one in an eternal substance and self-consistent power, which are but different phases of the thought of God. If then, while there is no authoritative decision to condemn the tendency, outward observation and our deepest consciousness unite in such a view of the world as demands no self-contradictory dogma of creation out of nothing, this itself is sufficient to force on our attention the probability of some pantheistic issue to the spiritual conflicts of our time.

Another influence which presses in the same direction, is the impossibility of maintaining, with our present knowledge of the physical world, the adequacy, or even the relevancy of analogies, which have been supposed to describe the relation of the Creator and His work. Unfortunately the unsympathetic tone occasionally assumed by scientific men, in their repudiation of theological ideas imperfectly expressive of noblest human convictions, begets a counter-hostility, and a wild alarm incapable of any calm estimate of facts. Thus I remember the shock and pain caused to a timid and deferential group of pious lionizers in a provincial town, by the contemptuous observation of a scientific Triton, that the notion of a paternal government of the world had been undermined, and must inevitably be exploded, by scientific research. Such a remark was surely, if the paradox may be allowed, half true and wholly false. For the government of

the world with a view to private advantage, which the necessary imperfection of the human image unavoidably suggests, is undoubtedly inconsistent with the facts not only of nature but of life. On the other hand, that the "Eternal Power not ourselves" does on the whole "make for righteousness," is a faith which in all probability the philosopher himself would have owned; and this, after all, constituted the conviction for which his startled admirers were most jealous. Nay farther, the loyalty which will fearlessly trust itself to the inevitable working of moral laws no less certain than physical order, is at least more nearly akin to the trustfulness of a brave-hearted child in his father, than it is to anything else. And therefore, to use words which were supposed to deny the existence of any justification for that trustfulness, conveyed an impression probably far from the speaker's intention, and at any rate infinitely more false than the analogy he denied. At the same time, it is not always possible to guard against such misunderstandings; and, besides, it is much to be feared that the very imperfection of the analogy is sometimes that on which religious people most insist. But the danger of misinterpretation must be faced,—for, whether we will it or not, many of the images, which have been adopted as expressive of God's relation to His creatures, are subsiding into idola of the sanctuary, which are reverenced there in a dim religious light,—but never carried abroad into the searching daylight of practical life.

Notwithstanding the professions of mysterious awe with which the devoutest men have spoken of the majesty of God, it has been too much the custom to insist upon definitions of His relation to the world, so precise as necessarily to imply a clear comprehension of His nature—a comprehension, which in the same breath is declared to be impossible. The reason for this is the fear, lest an acknowledgment of the impossibility of dogma on such a subject should weaken or altogether dissolve the practical power of godliness. And to this cause is due especially the vehemence with which the necessity for attributing to the Infinite One a strictly personal nature is insisted upon, as though the only other alternative were atheism. No one ought to undervalue such feelings. Certainly generic experience,—which means much more than any traditional opinion,—proves that in our conscious relation to the Infinite we touch a reality, which cannot be pictured otherwise than as a Personal Being. God is to us all that a transcendently great personal Friend could be,—*and very much more.* Yet it is useless to conceal from ourselves, that, in the intellectual form of this belief, there is something hardly consistent with prevalent and well-founded doctrines about the order and evolution of the world. Paley's celebrated analogy of the watch and its maker did but popularize the Platonic idea of creation as the result of Divine workmanship. But the portentous progress of natural discovery since Paley's day, to-

gether with the wide-spread interest it has excited, threatens to popularize still more the objection felt two thousand years ago, by one of the speakers in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, to the incongruous notion of a "workman God." No doubt when we observe that in the eye, as well as in the watch, there is an arrangement of parts, such as conduces to one obvious end, and could not conceivably conduce to any other, it is inevitable that we should regard the end as a purpose in both cases, and the arrangement of parts in each as equally an instance of design. But it does not follow that because our conclusion is inevitable, it is therefore the whole truth. It may very possibly happen that, as the barbarians who first saw a steam-vessel making head against wind and tide, thought that she must be a living creature,—since only such a supposition could make the novelty accord with their experience of self-moving objects,—so our attachment of such ideas as purpose and design to the arrangements of Nature may be only the nearest approximation that we can make to the conception of a reality, which is utterly beyond us. Nor is this mere conjecture. It is demonstrable that there must be some fallacy in such an argument as that of Paley. For if it be rigorously applied, it cannot prove what Paley certainly wished to establish,—the existence of an omnipotent and omniscient worker; but inevitably lands us in a conclusion, which would be repudiated by religion and science alike, with equal vehemence or scorn. For the

very essence of design is the adaptation of means to an end; and this signifies compliance with inevitable conditions, *apart from which the end would be unattainable.* Thus, if a watchmaker uses a coiled bar of steel for his motive power, it is because the conditions require the storing up of mechanical energy, in such a manner that it may be made to exhaust itself slowly. Another condition is, that this energy should be stored up in a very small compass; and we do not know of anything, which would comply with these conditions so well as a coiled spring of steel. Again, it is necessary that the motion produced should be equable and slow,—distributed differently to the hour hand, minute hand, and second hand respectively. The whole arrangement of the delicate parts is the triumph of ingenuity over difficulty, in so using the properties of matter as to attain the desired end. But if, hereafter, some new surprising means were discovered for making the hands move round a watch-face and mark time accurately, without main-spring or balance-wheel or other complication of parts, it is not to be supposed that any reasonable watchmaker would give himself the trouble of elaborating the now needless machinery. And if, in those days, any one were to pick up a watch with all the old-fashioned works complete, he might indeed feel that it was an indubitable instance of design; but he would also feel that it was an illustration of the difficulties imposed by ignorance. This, he would say, is the work either

of an old-fashioned artificer, or of a fool; for no one, understanding his business, would now bestow such labour on a purpose, which we can accomplish so much more simply and directly. Arrangement of parts, then, with a view to the production of a certain end, may indeed prove design; but it may also prove inferiority of resource. If anyone in an out-of-the-way part of the country were to find a tinder-box on the table instead of a box of matches, it would certainly prove careful arrangement; but it would also prove either ignorance of better appliances, or a needless waste of human labour. In other words, arrangement of parts with a view to a particular end, if we proceed on the human analogy proposed, proves the existence not only of a designer, but of a designer working under difficulties which can only be overcome by ingenuity. And the degree of simplicity or directness in the means used, as compared with the possibilities of the case, is a measure of the knowledge, the fertility of resource, or the care, concerned in the production of the work.

Now let us apply these principles to the argument from design in creation.* The eye seems to be an

* Part of the argument here is a reminiscence of a course of lectures delivered in Owens' College, Manchester, by the late A. J. Scott, on the subject of Natural Theology, about 1855. The lectures were never published,—in fact, they were unwritten,—and I took no notes: but like many another utterance of one of the greatest intellects this century has produced, they exerted a wonderfully determining influence on the mental and spiritual future of the few hearers.

ingenious adaptation of parts for the production of a certain end, that is, the formation of visual sensations in a living consciousness. But the very care apparently taken in the arrangement implies that there were difficulties to be overcome; stringent conditions, apart from compliance with which the end could not be attained. What would be proved, therefore, according to the human analogy, would be the existence of a mind limited by inevitable conditions, and overcoming difficulties by an effort of deliberate thought. Of course, this is not the idea entertained by devout minds concerning the Creator. For omnipotence is unlimited, and unconditioned, and subject to no difficulties whatever. *Omnipotence* being granted, it is easy to conceive that the effect might have been produced by means much more direct and simple, nay, without the intervention of any means whatever, and without the risk of losing any advantages involved in the present arrangement. Now when we find that a human designer has used means less simple and direct than those which were within his power, we usually call this clumsiness; and if he were to employ complicated machinery for the production of a result which would be equally well accomplished by a volition or a touch, we could hardly avoid regarding this as a pedantic or fantastic waste of energy. It may seem open to reply, that in the case of the eye the result could not be equally well attained in any other way. But this "could not" amounts simply to the denial of that om-

nipotence, which it is the very object of the argument to prove. Or if it be said that the immediate object is to prove, not omnipotence, but a creative Mind, which, when once established, is necessarily regarded as omnipotent; the answer is manifest, that no corollary can be allowed which entirely neutralizes the argument for the proposition itself. It is altogether an illegitimate process of thought first to prove a Designer by human analogies, and then jump to the conclusion that the Designer is of such a nature as to contradict the analogy in its essential points. Nor is it of any use to urge that no single case of design can be considered by itself, inasmuch as it is only an insignificant part in a universal harmony necessarily involving such detailed arrangements for its completeness. For this would be to raise the argument altogether above the analogy with which it started, and to consign its issue to that infinite realm of mystery where it ought to have been submissively left at the first. However the changes may be played upon the application of the analogy, we can never, without altogether surrendering it, neutralize its essential significance, which is, that design implies purpose only because it involves triumph over difficulties by ingenuity; while the idea of difficulty is entirely inconsistent with that of omnipotence, or unconditioned power. For if it is said that the difficulties are only apparent; then, since triumph over difficulty is an essential element in the analogy, it must necessarily follow that design likewise is only

apparent, at least according to our human conception of its meaning,—the only one with which we can deal.

Let not the purport of these words be mistaken. That the Infinite Majesty "hath made everything beautiful in his season" is a belief which is strengthened, rather than weakened, by all enlarged observation of the world. Doubtless there is a meaning beyond all human reason, in the connection of part with part, amid that transcendental Unity, which is dimly felt but never understood. It may very well be that our limited idea of design, like our notion of temporal succession,—which we find resistlessly intruding even on our contemplations of eternity,—is only one of the forms of thought that define a limited consciousness. But when we presume to represent the relations of the Infinite Majesty to the phenomenal world, as resembling those of a machinist to his work; the analogy lands us in absurdities from which philosophy and religion alike recoil. Such comparisons, when not pressed too far, may help our limping thought; may give colour and form to the glow of devotion; may touch with sympathetic interest our observation of natural wonders; but when urged as an adequate, or even definite representation of the reality, they inevitably verge upon that arrogant self-assertion, to whose conceited sciolism no abyss of being is too awful for intrusion. Far better that we should bear in mind the mute reverence imposed by the words of a sacred

writer already quoted; "also He hath set the world in their hearts, so that no man can find out the work that God doeth from the beginning to the end." For insistance upon the analogy of human design is an intrusion into the unsearchable beginning; and too familiar discussion of the purpose of creation is a rash attempt to scale the unapproachable end. The difficulties of thought, the silence of the heavens, the actual breathing, deathless beauty of creation, framed in the mystery of eternity, command us, with an inspiration which the age will not resist, to see God not so much as the meditative designer who makes, but rather as the Eternal Power, which constitutes and is the All in All.

But farther, there are some features in certain physical theories almost conclusively established, which seem to add to the metaphysical difficulties of the argument from design certain grave inconsistencies of fact. For when every one believed that, at some former inconceivable epoch in the world's history, birds and beasts and men started from the vacant air or from inanimate dust in full-grown perfection at the call of an almighty fiat, it was comparatively easy, if only the metaphysical difficulties could be ignored, to conceive of each organism as the result of a personal design, comparable to our own consciousness of mental effort. But now, whatever may be the sufficiency or insufficiency of "natural selection," apart from other forces, to account for the phenomena, it is a generally

accepted, perhaps we may say, established opinion, that all the species of living things, now existing, are the result of development, by ordinary processes of natural generation, from some few original organisms utterly unlike themselves. And when we candidly estimate all that is necessarily involved in such a belief, we must feel that the difficulty of insisting upon the analogy of human design is no longer one of merely metaphysical contradiction, but of actual fact. It is perfectly true, indeed, that neither natural selection, nor any other conceivable or inconceivable operation of merely physical forces, can possibly lessen the deep necessity that we feel for the fundamental energy of an inscrutable Power; but it is also true, that the operations of this inscrutable Power have not been after the fashion which would be suggested by the analogy of human design. The fashion of almighty Power is assuredly transcendently better, richer, more sublime than any petty efforts of human thought and skill; and certainly we must compare it to nothing *lower* than the keen foresight, comprehensive grasp, and sweeping will of godlike human souls. But for all that, it is manifestly not to be identified with any sort of design conceivable in our own consciousness. For, however narrow may be the limits which some would impose on the power of natural selection, it is perfectly certain that the living germs cast upon the world have always exceeded tenfold, fiftyfold, or even, in the case of some lower creatures, a hundredfold the

number of those brought to maturity. Nor is it possible to deny that the individuals destined to survive must always have been those best adapted to the conditions amidst which they were thrown. Thus the creatures less fitted to bear "the struggle for life" have been a constant sacrifice to ensure the happier fate of healthier beings, or of those unusually endowed. It may be, and indeed it is, impossible that such a process alone can account for all the beauty and variety which organic life has attained. But whatever other forces may have been at work, this process has assuredly taken place; nay we see it going on around us now; for still the number of living germs produced is out of all proportion to their chances of life. Of the human children brought into the world, at least half die before their seventh year. Amongst wild animals the loss is no doubt considerably greater; while amongst fish, if one out of a hundred ova were to come to maturity, the seas would in a few years become a solid living mass. Now, can it fairly be maintained that this is suggestive of design, as we know it in our own consciousness? Would any farmer in his senses scatter seed wildly over his field, in order that in the scramble for germination only the strongest might prevail? But if it be said that there is no analogy, because the resources of the farmer are exhaustible, while those of the Infinite are not; this is precisely the point for which we contend. For if the analogy breaks down here, it is impossible to press its

application at all. The essential force of the argument from design lies in the careful and economical adaptation of means to an end, in the most direct manner, and with the least loss of substance or force. And if, because of the exhaustlessness of creative resources, economy is not required, so neither is any ingenious adaptation of means to an end.

The failure of the analogy may also be illustrated by the mode in which human design, when applied to such a purpose, emulates the selective processes of nature. A cattle-breeder, who might seek to secure a perfect race of animals by simply slaughtering all the young below a certain standard of promise, might indeed finally attain his purpose, if he could afford to wait; but his plan would be assuredly condemned as clumsy and rude, lacking in all the characteristics of careful arrangement and forethought. Nay, even when the cattle-plague threatened ruin to all the graziers in the country, the remedy of "stamping out" was by many regarded as barbarous, and by all acknowledged to be a confession of ignorance and weakness. It was felt that all the subtler and keener elements, which characterize the best efforts of human design, were sunk in a despairing resort to brute force. What then is to be said, when we find that, however mysterious may be the origin of profitable variations in species, their predominance has been ensured by a simple process of "stamping out" all the individuals that lacked them? From the interpretation which would

be put upon any apparently analogous human proceeding, we here shrink with well-founded horror. How then can we dare to apply to other natural arrangements the petty analogy of human forethought and skill? It may be said that other ends, of which we know nothing, are subserved by this apparently ruthless waste of sentient life. But here again the whole argument is capriciously removed out of the plane on which it was initiated. If we are to see design only when we can compliment nature on an apparent resemblance to operations of human skill, and if, the moment that resemblance ceases, we are to confess our ignorance, and to refrain from carrying the analogy farther,—would it not be better, seeing how infinitely larger is our ignorance than our knowledge, to recognize in both bearings of the analogy an appearance only, which, though for some purposes practically useful, is infinitely below the divine reality? The long and apparently tentative process, by which the highest organisms, including man himself, have attained their present perfection, looks as much like a blind nisus, in some respects, as it appears to be like human design in others. But surely the real Power, underlying both sets of phenomena, is properly neither the one nor the other; it is infinitely above them both.

Another direction in which the analogy of human design seems incongruous with the facts, is suggested by physiological typology. The persistence of the same general plan of construction throughout, for

instance, the whole of the vertebrate order of animals, is generally felt now to be susceptible only of one interpretation; that, namely, which is founded upon a common genealogical origin. We may, therefore, regard as altogether exploded, the absurd and grotesque significance which used to be attached to rudimentary and useless parts; as though the Almighty had followed the custom of old-fashioned coach-builders, who, for the look of the thing, stuck a sham pistol-box at the back of the chariot long after the need for the reality had passed away. No one will now contend that rudimentary wings were given to the apteryx, or the stump of a tail to the hog, only that Nature might please herself with the fulfilment of a "type." But the religious difficulty of these rudimentary organs is by no means disposed of when "creation by law" or divinely-directed development, is substituted for miraculously-instantaneous production.

The attempt is indeed often made to reconcile the doctrine of gradual development with prescriptive theological ideas, by the reflection that the production of living creatures, whether by a slow process or by a sudden miracle, must, in the former case just as much as in the latter, be the work of an adequate power; and farther, it is added that no explanation of the immediately operative forces can be given, which does not involve the mystery of eternally creative might. The reflection is perfectly just. The argument is unanswerable so

far as it goes; but it is as unwise as it is dangerous, to attempt to gather from that argument what is not contained in it. Those who insist on this line of thought too often imagine, that when they have shown the necessity of a self-existing, all-creative Power, they have re-established, in unimpaired completeness, the familiar theory of personal design. But a moment's thought will show that this is impossible. If the analogy is to be maintained, we must now compare the work of creation to some long process of gradual production, such as we are accustomed to, for instance, in the production of wine from the vine, or of woven tissue from loose, fibrous material. Now the cases just mentioned are typical instances of two different classes of manufacturing process, between which we must take our choice, if we are to insist still on the analogy between a gradual creation and slowly-evolved works of personal design. The difference may be described thus,—in the former case, the producer is largely dependent upon the operation of natural laws altogether beyond his control. He may exhibit skill in the arrangement of his vineyard; in the preparation of the soil; in the pruning and training of the trees; and in the direction of the processes of fermentation. But a season too dry or too wet, or an unanticipated blight, or nameless atmospheric influences, may pervert or destroy the issues of his design. That the result is different from his intentions, may be no proof whatever of any want of skill; and the

presence of some undesirable flavour in his wine may be the unavoidable effect of a process carried out under conditions which he cannot control. In the other case—that of the cotton or woollen manufacturer,—all the forces concerned are, not of course absolutely, but far more completely, under his control. Throughout the whole process, from the first rough loosening of the compressed material, through the operations of combing and spinning, and winding and weaving, every step is completely under the worker's control, and is effected directly or indirectly through the operation of present human energy. No effect, therefore, which results from any step in the process, can be regarded as beyond his control. He does not watch the thing grow. He makes it. However multifarious may be the stages of its development, it is still at each moment purely the result of human design and labour.

To which, then, of these modes of gradual production does creation by development bear most resemblance? Since there is no power but of God, and since the only cogency in arguments for a natural theology lies in the impossibility of conceiving fragmentary forces to work for an instant without the support of Omnipotence, it is clearly the latter and not the former type of human processes of production, which must furnish the presumed analogy to the operations of God. If, indeed, we could penetrate the secrets of thought, we should probably find that many, who imagine

Paley's argument to be easily adapted to theories of development, do still conceive of an infant world thrown off in the beginning by Omnipotence, with a self-contained power of growth, such as needed no new application of creative energy. But when once this conception is grasped, it is found to involve the really deadly heresy of a belief in fragmentary forces operating apart from any sustaining Omnipotence. If there could be a force which is not as indissolubly related to Omnipotence, as every creek and cranny of sea-water is to the ocean with which it rises and falls, the one intellectual necessity for the thought of God would be gone. But we need not here repeat arguments against an exploded fallacy. The only idea of gradual creation, which can be tolerated in these times, is that which makes every step in the process a phenomenal manifestation of an actually present Omnipotence. To carry out our analogy, then, we must suppose that in the creation of the higher living creatures, Omnipotence guided every step of the process—just as human design guides every modification of the raw material—with an express view to the ultimate end. Now, that the forces concerned in creation were not something lower, but rather something infinitely higher, than what we call intelligence, we not only grant, but earnestly assert. This, however, is not the question at issue. The real matter of debate is, whether we can so modify the argument from design, as to conceive a personal Being moulding each successive link in an endless genealogy,

with an express view to the production of a result which seems to us final? It is as a difficulty in the way of such a view, that the existence of rudimentary parts, of no service to the surviving organisms, does appear to be fatal. It is certain that any ideally perfect human design would do away with such members at once, the moment they cease to be of any service. Nor are such practices as that of old-fashioned coach-builders, above mentioned, of any assistance here. For that is simply a specimen of stupid conservatism, which it would be impious to attribute to creative power. Of whatever value the analogy of human design may be, no one would think of insisting upon its *admitted imperfections* as a part of the argument; and yet, without pressing those imperfections, it is impossible to make the argument consistent. But if it be fairly carried out, what it proves is this,—that an omnipotent designer, intending to produce a beautiful and perfect work, went through millions of operations, when a single fiat would have sufficed; that these operations consisted, not in clearly-aimed and economical modifications of material, but in the evolution of a thousand imperfect products, amongst which some single one might form a step to the next stage, while all the rest were destroyed; that thus the living material wasted was immensely greater than that which was used; that myriads of weaklings were suffered to struggle together, as though omniscience could not

decide, without experiment, which were the better worth preserving; that in each successive modification the worker carefully preserved, so far as was possible, the form of the previous stage, until it was found to be inconsistent with life; nay, that he carefully introduced into each successive product parts which had become obselete, useless, or even dangerous—and all this not through any inevitable conditions—for omnipotence excludes them—but in pursuit of a mysterious plan, the reasons for which, as well as its nature, are acknowledged to be utterly inscrutable. Analogies, which lead to such issues, surely cannot be of much value for the nobler spiritual aims of religion. And if, whenever the argument is closely pressed, we are compelled to protest against intrusion on the sacred realm of mystery, surely it would be at once more consistent, more candid, and more reverent, to own that all human analogies break down beneath the tremendous strain of such an application, because the mode in which the finite springs from the Infinite is wholly beyond our ken. As certainly as anything can be known, we do assuredly know that all relations of matter and force hint at some transcendent Unity, which is the substance and power of them all. And the predisposition to worship that Infinite One is an inspiration constant and universal as the pulsations of life, which flow from eternal Power into the bosom of humanity. But analogies, which would turn that unspeakable worship into the familiar admiration felt

for the inventor of a new machine, are increasingly felt, in these times, to be two-edged weapons, with which faith does ill to play. For only by the recognition that adaptation of means to an end, in order of time, belongs only to temporal and fragmentary life,—not to eternal Being,—do we preserve the attitude of soul which is unassailable by the bewilderments of false analogy or materialistic despair. When lying on a sick-bed, with weary brain, who has not been tortured with the restless desire of the eyes to follow out, from beginning to end, the lines of some ornamental pattern stamped upon the wall? And as those lines run hither and thither, in and out, with no starting-point and no goal, how sickly is the irritation with which useless bewilderment affects the overwrought nerves! Yet in calm health no such impulse is felt. The whole design is seen as one; with every part contemporaneous and essential to the whole. So, perhaps, when coming generations shall look with more peaceful self-control upon the glories of the world, they will not feel the fretful longing, which torments us, to trace the lines of purpose through the maze. For they will have found that in proportion as we can realize in sympathy an eternal Life, the whole universe flashes out at once in perfect unity; not a riddle of causes and effects, of conditions and successions, of purposes and plans; but a self-consistent, self-contained, and self-containing whole.

Enough has been said to show, that the pantheistic tendencies of recent science and philosophy are due to the reverence engendered by larger views of the mystery of being, rather than to any real hostility to religion. But if the view maintained in the last essay concerning the essential nature of religion be at all correct, we might well look for hints of pantheism in the religious emotions themselves. Nor should we be disappointed. For, notwithstanding all vehement denunciations of any failure in dogmatic clearness of definition in regard to the Being, who almost in the same breath is declared inconceivable,—the deepest religious feeling has always shrunk from thinking of God as only one, however vast, amidst a host of other natures. Such, surely, was the feeling of St. Paul when he spoke of Him "in whom we live and move, and have our being." However true it may be that in most of his references to the Divine Being the Apostle appears to assume a personal nature defined according to the analogy of our own consciousness, it is also true that words like those just quoted involve some vague supplementary notion of the Divine existence, such as cannot fairly be reconciled with any strict maintenance of the human analogy. For our personal consciousness becomes distinct, just in proportion to the recognized sharpness of the contrast between the me and the not-me. And any effort to conceive of a life which so pervades ourselves and other modes of creature existence, that, we may be said to "live and

have our being" therein, must needs sacrifice that sharpness of definition, as between subject and object, which is an essential feature in our self-consciousness. We cannot be far wrong in believing that, in his most exalted thoughts concerning the Divine Being, the Apostle felt the inadequacy of that limited conception, which would make the Infinite to be one amongst other existences, and capable therefore of comparison, at however great a distance. This idea is confirmed by other passages, in which the same apostle seems to contrast the all-embracing comprehensiveness of the Supreme Being with the fragmentary self-centred consciousness of the creature. Thus when he declares that at the end of all spiritual conflict "the Son also himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under him that God may be all in all,"* he seems to give, in the guise of a prophetic forecast of final perfection, his ideal imagination of ultimate ontological reality. And this interpretation seems confirmed by the description which he elsewhere gives of the Church, as "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."† St. John's conception of God as infinite light,—light which takes form in us as a consciousness of divine sonship, as glowing love, as shining purity,—would seem to point in the same direction. And quite consistent with this is the same writer's idea of sin as, in its essence, falsehood, a dark negation, an emptiness of God. Putting on one side all controversy about the

* 1 Corinthians xv. 28. † Ephesians i. 23.

authorship of the fourth gospel, it is perfectly clear that, whoever wrote it, he must have understood Christ to teach a doctrine, which it would require not only extreme subtilty, but a determined perversion of language on the part of interpreters, to distinguish in some places from spiritual pantheism. Take for instance the interpretation, which the Lord is recorded to have given, of the 82nd Psalm. "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?* If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" It is impossible to see how the plain significance of this passage can be evaded. No matter what may have been the significance of the term "gods," according to the original intention of the psalmist; it is here adduced as equivalent to the Divinity, with which the Lord himself claimed so close a relationship. Were it not so, there would be no force whatever in the quotation. For if we for a moment suppose, that the opponents of the sacred speaker believed the word, in the mouth of the psalmist, to have meant merely judges, or other earthly dignitaries—it is perfectly clear that the parallel, which constituted the very point of the Lord's reply, would have been utterly non-existent. We are compelled, therefore, to believe that, amongst the circle of hearers immediately concerned, the word was accepted

* Ch. x. 34.

in its obvious significance, as describing a participation in the Divine nature. And indeed it is notorious that the Jewish Kabbalah has handed down, from remote antiquity, pantheistic conceptions of the universe, which would have made such an interpretation in the highest degree natural. The emphasis with which the Lord reminds his hearers that the passage is indisputable,—that "the scripture cannot be broken,"—shows that he insisted upon the fulness of its weighty significance. The argument in the gospel therefore is plainly this: that Christ's claim to a mysterious kinship with God was nothing abnormal or even novel; that long ago sympathetic susceptibility to a living Divine word had been regarded as the token of a nature akin to God; and that his own nature and mission were but a clearer and more glorious manifestation of the same mysterious truth at which the psalmist had hinted. Farther, if any confirmation were needed for this interpretation of the argument, it would be found in words which the same evangelist elsewhere attributes to the Divine Teacher. For in that prayer, which to thousands of longing hearts has appeared the supreme ideal of communion with God, Christ, interceding for his disciples everywhere, prays "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made

perfect in one."* If words such as these are to be interpreted as describing only moral imitation, there is an end to the significance of language. For the Lord emphatically makes his own inherence in God, and the indwelling of God in him, to be the precise type of his disciples' union with himself and with the Father. They are all to be one; to be made perfect in one, "even," says the Lord, "as We are one." That the language is mystical, and therefore indefinite, is indisputable. But like all other mystical religious language, it points unmistakably in one direction. Nor is it possible to do justice to the serious import of the words, unless we suppose them to mean, that the final issue of the Christian religion is a practical and conscious realization of the truth, that God is not this or that, which may be pointed to, defined, or conceived, but absolutely and exhaustively all in all. That such an idea of religion, or of the universe, is not logically or consistently carried out in the New Testament, is a truth which must be candidly acknowledged, and concerning which we may have something more to say presently. Our point now is, that when religious contemplation takes its highest range, it inevitably emerges in the vision of God as all in all; and what we have seen is sufficient to show, that this observation holds good of those apostolic writings, which form the earliest records of the outburst of Christian life.

The learned and exhaustive historical essay of the

* Ch. xvii. 21.

Rev. John Hunt affords numerous and telling illustrations of the pantheistic tendencies which have characterised many of the devoutest fathers of the Church, as well as some of the most saintly souls of later days. We need not be at all surprised to hear that while Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, and others of the substantially orthodox tradition, held sentiments which clearly involved pantheism, Arius leaves not a trace of any such tendency.* For, to say nothing of the Logos doctrine, which suggested the inspiration of all life by the divine reason, or of the Holy Ghost, as the quickening and regenerative energy of God, mystical forms of thought which lent themselves easily to pantheism,—the very glow of spiritual aspiration, which recoiled from the cold intellectualism of Arius, was necessarily impatient of any conception concerning the supreme object of devotion, such as would allow true life or any substantial being apart from communion with God. So far as we can gather, Arius thought that the common-sense view of religion required a very sharp and impassable line to be drawn between the creature and the Creator. It was not, therefore, merely his formal heresy concerning the creation of the Son, which set him at discord with the traditions of the Church. There was a much deeper issue than this; although, as usual, the clash of mere opinions obscured it. Account for it as we may, the history of the Church shows clearly enough that

* Hunt's "Pantheism," p. 110.

when any sect of religionists set themselves to work out a complete and self-consistent theory of the universe, on the basis of an eternal, and impassable, and ontological distinction between the Creator and the creation, they have almost uniformly lost all daring freedom in the devotional life, and have been in danger of merging religion in an intellectual system. Nor should this be at all surprising. For the sentiment of worship does so utterly transcend all mere admiration of known and measured greatness, that it is incapable of surviving the loss of all mystical elements of consciousness. And such mystical elements must more or less disappear, in proportion as we work out a conception, which would leave only external relations between God and the world. The notion of a merely mechanical pervasion, as of the luminiferous ether in atmospheric air, in water, or in glass, could not possibly diminish the mere externality of Divine relations to the world. Unless each point of being, so to speak, is at its heart divine, the only relations possible between it and the Creator are essentially external and mechanical. But in the endeavour to conceive such relations between a Creator and a creation mutually exclusive, the sense of the Infinite is, whether consciously or not, insensibly disguised and dropped. While the mystery of matter is ignored, it may be possible for a while to conceive of such a relation between the world and God; and in that case the conception of the "opifex Deus" is entertained in all its hard distinctness. But to think

of God at the same time as Infinite, is an effort of thought too fundamentally self-contradictory to have any reality about it. Now, if we have been at all right in regarding religion as an endeavour after a practical expression of man's conscious relation to the Infinite; it will be clear that such a notion of the world's relation to God, when entertained with hard dogmatic distinctness, must sooner or later be fatal to all devotional warmth. This observation seems in accordance with experience. For, whatever may have been the intellectual force and clearness, or, within certain limits, the logical consistency of system, characteristic of the sects that have departed from the Catholic Church in the direction of Arius and his followers, it can scarcely be contended that they have been specially distinguished by spiritual fervour. It is certain, indeed, that there have been men amongst the English and American Unitarians, who have individually exhibited a keen and noble spiritual life. But it will generally be found that such men show a marked sympathy for more orthodox believers, precisely in regard to those mystical experiences, which imply fundamentally pantheistic assumptions concerning the relations of the creature and the Creator.

On the other hand, those sects which have departed from the Catholic Church in a different, if not opposite direction, through motives of religious aspiration rather than of intellectual opinion, have uniformly moved on lines having a manifest issue in a sort of

mystical pantheism. Whatever may be thought of the Gnostics, certainly the Albigenses, and the Friends of God, to whom belonged the author of the "Theologia Germanica" were men whose fervour of spirit was impatient of formal traditional trammels. The "Theologia Germanica" is so well known to English readers through Miss Winkworth's admirable translation, that quotations are not needed to prove its spiritual pantheism. And they who know that little treatise have, in it, a very significant illustration of the ideas that seem to have been associated with the most earnest spiritual life still glowing in the darkest ages of the Church. Readers of the devotional poetry of later days will be at no loss for instances which prove that the most fervent forms of later Protestantism have, in their contemplative moods, been characterised by a mysticism which is only a disguised form of pantheism. For mysticism surely consists in the spiritual realization of a grander and a boundless Unity, that humbles all self-assertion by dissolving it in a wider glory. It does not follow that the sense of individuality is necessarily weakened. But habitual contemplation of that Divine unity impresses men with the feeling that this individuality is phenomenal only. Hence the paradox of mysticism. For apart from this phenomenal individuality, we should not know our own nothingness; and personal life is good only through the bliss of being lost in God. As was said above, true religious worship does not consist in the acknowledg-

ment of a greatness which is estimated by comparison, but rather in the sense of a Being who surpasses all comparison, because He gives to phenomenal existences the only reality they can know. Hence, as we have said, the deepest religious feeling necessarily shrinks from thinking of God as a kind of gigantic Self amidst a host of minor selves. The relation of the sun and planets can furnish no analogy to the relation of the Creator and his creatures. The very thought of such a thing is a mockery of the profoundest devotion. This feeling is well expressed in verses, which I am glad to be able to quote from a Roman Catholic Hymn-book:—*

"O Majesty unspeakable and dread!
Wert thou less mighty than thou art,
Thou wert, O Lord! too great for our belief,
Too little for our heart.

Thy greatness would seem monstrous by the side
Of creatures frail and undivine;
Yet they would have a greatness of their own
Free and apart from thine.

Such grandeur were but a created thing,
A spectre, terror, and a grief,
Out of all keeping with a world so calm,
Oppressing our belief.

* * * *

It would outgrow us from the face of things,
Still prospering as we decayed,
And like a tyrannous rival, it would feed
Upon the wrecks it made.

* Faber's Hymns.

But what is infinite must be a home,
A shelter for the meanest life,
Where it is free to reach its greatest growth
Far from the touch of strife.

We share in what is infinite, 'tis ours,
For we and it alike are thine;
What I enjoy, great God! by right of thee,
Is more than doubly mine."

These words in truth only give utterance to the devoutest religious sentiment of all times; but they seem to have a special significance at the present day. Emotions implying pantheistic assumptions are in religion nothing new. But in the light of modern views of Nature they acquire a fresh importance. For such feelings suggest the only form of religion manifestly consistent with the indefinite development of physical knowledge, in the direction indicated by the irreversible progress of modern discovery.

The case then would seem to stand thus. It has been supposed necessary, in the interest of religion, to maintain, concerning the being and nature of God, certain dogmas which represent Him, not as *the* One, but as one amongst a countless multitude of inferior beings; not as the All in All, but as immensely greater than the things with which He is contrasted. Then in order to retain the idea of His absolute being, in distinction from the dependent existence of all else, the dogma of a creation out of nothing has been invented. In former times this dogma was generally so

taught as to involve the sudden appearance in full maturity, at some past moment or moments of time, of the earth, the sun, moon and stars, and all living creatures. More recently, in face of undeniable facts, attempts have been made so to modify this dogma as to require only a limited number of instantaneous and miraculous creations, perhaps only of two substances, matter and spirit. Again, alleged proofs of the Creator's personality and activity have been drawn from resemblances, in the arrangements of nature, to the results of human design. But now, on the other hand, this system of dogma is seriously threatened by a consensus of objections, which may all find precedents in antiquity, but which have never in all the previous history of thought been so combined, illustrated, popularized, and enforced on public attention. The mystery of matter was always felt by the thoughtful; but now, by the microscope and the spectroscope, it awakens the wonder of the thoughtless. The correlation in organic life of two ultimately and fundamentally different substances, an idea often repudiated in the past, is now manifestly on the wane. The essential identity of matter and force, often imaginatively conjectured, seems to glimmer on the borders of knowledge. The fact that every natural object, when carefully examined, opens up an endless perspective of evolution, is becoming increasingly familiar to every one. It can hardly be disputed that such ideas, when followed to their ultimate results, press upon us in a very practical

form the old metaphysical impossibility of conceiving a creation out of nothing. When in our contemplation of the past the solid world melts away into a nebulous potentiality, it seems needless to burden our minds with the effort of reconciling our reason to a contradiction in terms. The conviction, therefore, that the external world is ultimately reducible to endlessly varied impressions made upon us we know not how, by one eternal and essentially incognizable substance, is a belief, the final prevalence of which over every mind capable of conceiving it, we may confidently predict. But such a conviction absolutely necessitates a reconsideration of dogmas concerning the Divine Nature. Again, the argument from design, which, if it were legitimately used, could only prove a limited designer working under difficulties, is more and more discredited in proportion as we obtain a more detailed knowledge of the processes by which things came to be what they are. That these processes indicate something infinitely transcending any blind mechanical force, we may indeed fearlessly assert. But that this Something is not to be identified with anthropomorphic notions of design, is at least equally clear. Indeed the only refuge open to the "Opifex Deus" theory, from the dark doubts which hang over the apparently wasteful process of creation by law, is the manifestly inconsistent assertion, that the works of the Infinite are not to be measured by a human standard. The assertion is perfectly just; but when once its import is weighed, it

recoils in ruin upon the whole argument appealing for its aid. Such obvious and pressing difficulties are not to be shelved by any passionate proclamations of a stern alternative between old dogmas and atheism. The heart of man recoils, and always will recoil, from that ghastly sense of universal death, which comes with the momentary imagination of a Godless world. But the mind of man is equally intolerant of obviously untenable propositions, maintained on grounds of supposed expediency. And when such a cruel alternative is harshly urged, though the result in a few cases may be the suppression of doubt by main force, its wider effect is that deadliest of all scepticism, which endures the misery of a hollow profession of belief, because the universe will not answer the cravings of the soul. But farther, it has been shown that Christianity itself, and precisely in those mystic forms which most excite devotion, offers suggestions in entire harmony with the utmost indications of physical research. On the dim borderland, where the philosopher's eager eye sees the sparkling world of sense fade away into an infinite beyond,—there he may behold apostle and saint pacing as on familiar ground, in rapt meditation of eternal Power and Life. For not as One amongst many, not as a central sun with wheeling planets, have the most reverent worshippers thought in their inmost hearts of God; but rather as the One comprehending all, as the only power, and only substance, out of which creature existence shines in flickering rays. Surely then it is

not too much to urge, that the question whether Christianity is or is not consistent with some form of Pantheism, should be reconsidered by religious men.

In the farther development of this discussion, it will be necessary to show, as distinctly as the question will allow, what is and what is not involved in the pantheism apparently suggested to the present age. For in some respects it undoubtedly differs from the forms in which it has been advocated by the most noted of its past adherents. We shall then be in a position to judge how far Christianity is of the same or of a different spirit; and it will be my aim to prove that a consistent application of those principles of interpretation, which are adopted by all believers in the rationality of religion, must discover in pantheism the essence of the Christian spirit. Finally it will be necessary to show, that many difficulties supposed to be especially inherent in the pantheistic theory, are equally and more offensively involved in systems of recognized dogma. It may then be possible to prognosticate a future for religion, all the brighter for the threatening but fruitful clouds which have for awhile obscured its realm.

The greatest and the most beautiful spirit that ever advocated pantheism as the true theory of the universe, was undoubtedly Benedict Spinoza. Indeed, to many minds it is with his name, and with his ideas, that the word itself is almost exclusively associated. Misinter-

pretations of his opinions, as for instance of his predication of extension as an attribute of the Divine substance, have occasioned the most undeserved denunciations of his supposed materialistic views of God. The keen force and enormous grasp of his intellectual imagination, which aspired to a contemplative throne whence the whole universe could be viewed in its oneness and in its multiplicity, in its wholeness and in its variety, in its unconditional eternity and in its complexity of internal relations, excited in him an ambition too daring for man; and resulted in a fabric of thought, perfect in its own amazing completeness, but utterly incommensurable with fact. So far as his fundamental principles are concerned, Spinoza seems to have attained as much truth as is thinkable by the human mind, or expressible in terms of human speech. His theory of the universe is the only one according to which the being of God is a self-evident and necessary truth, the contrary of which is unthinkable. Other systems may affect to prove the being of God; but with him it needs no proof, other than the futility of attempting to think the contrary.* Other thinkers may attempt the supererogatory work of demonstrating the existence of that which is; with him it is a cognition as natural to clearness of thought, as the sense of daylight to clearness of eye. It is true that his mode of approaching the mystery of Eternal Being does not at once suggest, to ordinary thought, the name of God. But

* Ethices Prop. xi.

this is only because the approaches of the universal temple, along which ordinary thought is guided, are not those which lead most directly to the inmost shrine. Devotional imagination must and will conceive God under some pictured form, which in the purest religions represents for the most part what He is to the conscience and to the heart. He is King; He is Judge; He is Father; He is Redeemer; and the human attributes associated with such human thoughts occur first to the mind, when the supreme Name is uttered to the ear. But that He is more, infinitely more than such thought-pictures can express, no devout worshipper will hesitate for a moment to acknowledge. How earnest faith thinks of Him as the only essential life, from which our seeming life shines out; how it attributes to him eternal being in which all phenomenal and temporal existences inhere; we have already seen. But such transcendental thoughts of God are not those which *first* occur to feelings of simple devotion. They dawn upon the mind in mystical fashion, after long spiritual aspiration, as horizon after horizon of apparent definition disappears, and the ineffable grandeur of the object drowns contemplation in infinity. Yet it is felt, as consciousness is lost, that here, and here alone, we touch the everlasting truth. Spinoza pursues a different path, and one which it must be confessed is hitherto, and perhaps must be for ever, impossible to the majority of human souls. To think him wanting

in devoutness would be a cruel wrong, if any wrong could now be done to one of the most seraphic spirits that ever burned amidst the obscurities of time; at any rate a wrong to ourselves; for we are always maimed and weakened by injustice to the dead. But it must be owned that his divine philosophy was not merely the yearning expansiveness of spiritual aspiration. It was in the bright panoply of a fearless intellect that he faced the problem of the world; and by sheer mental force he cleft his way at once to the last boundless contemplations of far-flown faith. Before his glance all phenomenal changeful things sank back into the bosom of that which is. He began with the eternal substance, which cannot be conceived to begin or end; and in that substance, possessed of infinite attributes that are susceptible to infinite modes, he saw the whole universe as the riches of one infinite Being. Is it inconceivable that by reversing the method of spiritual aspiration, this essential being, in which the latter ends, should be connected with the experience of divine grace and beneficence in which it begins? Is it impossible to begin with the intellectual idea of Eternal Being, and to pass through the Mystic's dream of True Substance, down to the humble convictions and aspirations in which that dream began? The very effort ought to throw some light upon the future of religion; even though we fail, where great pioneers of thought have striven in vain. For the one spiritual necessity of this age is a realization of the

connection which certainly does exist between the peculiar warmth of religious emotion and the boundlessness of all ultimate issues in our thoughts about the world. That Spinoza did not succeed in such an attempt as is here suggested must be confessed. But it may save the suggestion from the charge of presumption, if we remark, that the very keenness and grasp of his intellectual power may perhaps explain his failure. For, starting from some fundamental and self-evident assumptions, he conceived the idea of drawing out, in order of thought, all relations and successions of phenomenal existence, as completely and harmoniously as eternal power has drawn them out in order of actual existence. But we know more of the greatness of the universe, and of the infinite complication of its processes, than could possibly be known to Spinoza. And we are sure that the accomplishment of such an intellectual design as his, is no more possible to the mind of man, than the creation and government of the world would be to his practical energy. In such a scheme facts must needs be construed according to the logical processes which are the laws of the whole work. A subjective completeness of idea, answering to the objective perfection of the universe, is the object of such intense desire, that little or no place is allowed for unknown and incalculable forces. Facts bend to thoughts, not thoughts to facts. And hence we feel little wonder that the mysterious freedom of the will, with all the thrilling interests that its assumption has

given to human life, should be sacrificed to the completeness of the scheme. But the object of a Christian Pantheism should be much more modest, and likewise far more practical. There is not the slightest reason why it should attempt to explain everything. And indeed the vain ambition to do so would be a renunciation of the lowly Christian spirit. Its fundamental principles should be practical rather than theoretic; a determination to recognise facts as they are; and an insistance that the facts of religious experience are incapable of being explained away. The one principle would require us to acknowledge, what surely only obstinate wilfulness can disguise from thoughtful minds, —that no external authority, and no miraculous theory of revelation affords an indisputable foundation for a universal religion. It also forces us to own, that dogmatic conceptions of God, founded upon human analogies, are more and more discredited by increasing knowledge of the world and its history. But the same principle encourages us fearlessly to take our stand upon the self-evident truth, that inasmuch as something now is, something always must have been; and therefore Being is eternal. Again, the same principle would lead us to allow, that the creation of anything out of nothing being a contradiction in terms, everything, that now is, must be in some sense a modification of that which has ever been. Nor is such an application at all inconsistent with the professedly practical character of our principle. It is simply a recognition

of the irrepressible energy of that expansive intellectual desire, which forces the mind from bound to bound of larger generalization, until all worlds are merged in a real though inconceivable unity. That the unity is real cannot possibly be disputed, for the contrary is unthinkable; nor can it fairly be maintained that the word is unmeaning.

Whatever might have been the case when men's conceptions of the physical world were formed almost wholly by fanciful speculation and false analogy, the modern recognition of the reign of law gives a very real meaning to the unity implied in the word *universe*. Our idea of a living organism, as an arrangement of forces such that each part exists only by subserving the life of the whole, hardly gives a more definite feeling of unity than does the idea of a universe, in which each apparently separate existence is what it is by force of laws that bind it in a general order. No one can now think of the star-realm as a chaos, with systems ranging hither and thither, the sport of independent disconnected mechanical forces. We are hardly more sure that the solar system is governed by one force, which holds all its orbs in their relative positions and harmonious movements, than we are that the Milky Way and all the hosts of known and unknown stars, are marshalled by the same power in symmetry and order. It is true, that in the larger contemplation the definite bounds that mark all finite unities are lost. But after all, the essence of our conception of unity lies

not in definite bounds, but in pervasion by one arranging, combining, and guiding force, that governs the relations of part to part. This is our real notion of unity in a tree, in an animal, in a work of design. And this notion of unity is capable of application to a universe in which all thought of bounds is lost. Nor are we impressed with this sense of unity only when considering the universe as extended. For the researches of science into matter and force have given us an *intensive* realization of the oneness of things, such as is, if possible, even more impressive. Every form of force is now known to be capable of translation into an equivalent of some other form; and stedfast pursuit of the mystery of matter brings us out at last, as we have seen, to the conviction that all physical phenomena are but the partial and fragmentary manifestation, to our phenomenal consciousness, of an eternal reality in which power and substance are one. The irrefragable necessity of the law which urges all thought towards this infinite unity is admitted, or rather insisted upon, by Mr. Herbert Spencer, in that chapter of his "First Principles," wherein he deals with the relativity of all knowledge. But we need not allow that everything possible has been said concerning this sense, when we call it with him, "an indefinite consciousness of the unformed and unlimited." For as we cannot think of atmospheric air apart from the rippling breaths, or breathing sounds, by which we are made cognizant of its universal embrace; as we cannot

think of the luminiferous ether apart from the local play of light,—so we cannot think of that infinite unity apart from the play and vibration, so to speak, of the localized phenomenal forces, which we conceive as inherent in an otherwise unknown and unknowable substance. That unity is not a metaphysical abstraction utterly disconnected with things as we know them. It is the sum of all energies that we know, supplemented by that measureless complement which lies between the bounds of our knowledge and the infinite. It is not only the source, but the strength and essence of the light, and beauty, and force, which suggest to us a real world outside ourselves. And it is, moreover, the unseen and unsearchable reality which connects these fragmentary phenomena together, making them subject to one invariable order. It is, finally, not only the substance of things seen; it is the potentiality of that which does not appear, but may; that is, of all possible existence. We are not then obliged to regard this divine oneness of the universe only as a dim abstraction; we think of it as the background, as the very truth and life of things as they do appear. The brightness of the sun, the tenderness of evening clouds, the freshness of the morning, the joy of creature life, nay, if we but think of it aright, the fury of the storm, the keenness of the lightning, the destructive might of the sea, may be, and will be connected, in the contemplative mind, with the essential power that makes all work together for

good. When, in a misty mountain-land, sunlit-peaks stand out here and there, we cannot help following in imagination the silver lines of various contour, till they are merged in the massive roots which hold those peaks on high. It is not as isolated spots of light, but as hints of a grandeur unrevealed, that they most affect the heart. So is it with the perceptions and the knowledges that start out to view from the inscrutable abyss of infinite being. Never, though in themselves they may present a garland of beauty, or an impression of proportioned order, is their most searching charm to be explained by any self-contained attractions; always the eye follows the flowing lines of form till they are lost in a sacred darkness; and always the mind runs up the train of linked causation, until it merges in an infinity of power.

This much, at least, a candid determination to recognize facts as they are, would compel us to own concerning this sense of universal being on which we are insisting. But as to any attempt to explain how the Eternal Being produces in us the perception of phenomenal, fragmentary, and changeful existence,—common sense, to say nothing of a sound philosophy of ignorance, utterly forbids it. No reason on earth can be given why a pantheistic theory of the world should be expected, any more than other religious systems, to justify itself by a complete solution of the riddle of life. But if the question be asked, "Why then should it be put forth at all?" the simple

answer is, because it involves less arbitrary assumption, because it is more manifestly congruous with facts as we know them, than any other theory whatever. It takes its stand upon that feeling of an infinite unity, which grows in strength with every extension of our knowledge. It is involved in the increasing discredit of every theory which necessitates a creation out of nothing. It is the inevitable corollary of the doctrines of "continuity" and evolution. It assumes nothing but the fact of our own consciousness, and its education by the perceived contrasts and congruities of an outer world. It finds a revelation in the present moment, which is the sum of all the past, and the germ of all the future. It sees eternity in the present hour; for everything, which can be, is, though now disguised in form by the phenomenal succession, correlative to finite knowledge. And pantheism alone can give full and adequate meaning to the words of the ancient doxology which declares, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."

But the very same principle which insists upon a recognition of facts as they are, would, in its particular application, require a heartfelt appreciation of the power of religion in the history of mankind. Nor is such an appreciation at all consistent with the too frequent practice of attributing to falsehood the beneficent and regenerative influences of truth. We may safely admit, indeed, that the highest truths have

often been more striking and impressive because clothed in an imaginative form. But that is only because the form was necessary, either to awaken the attention, or otherwise to secure an entrance for the truth into the heart. Thus the parable of the Prodigal Son is an admitted fiction, so far as the form is concerned. But the imaginative story is only valuable for the force with which it impresses on the heart the beauty and exhaustlessness of divine mercy. And it is against the supposition of unreality in this spiritual element in the narrative, that devout feeling indignantly protests. The same distinction may be made wherever religious convictions are embodied in traditional memories, miraculous visions, or alleged historical actions. The character of the outward form is entirely a matter of evidence, to be judged by precisely the same canons which are applicable to evidence concerning anything else. Or, in other words, as expressed in the third essay of this series, it is the object of sight as distinguished from faith. What faith has to do with is the spiritual truth, which answers to inherent predispositions of the soul. Now, in the immediately preceding essay, it was urged that religion in its essential nature is an endeavour after a practical expression of man's conscious relation to the Infinite. "The powers of the world to come," or at least of the world beyond the senses, have, as described elsewhere, impressed the heart in many different forms, beginning in primeval ages with the simplest

emotions of wonder, and leading men on by successive steps of revelation to mystic contemplations of eternal Being. Any system of opinion, positive or negative, which depreciates, undervalues, or explains away this spiritual experience of mankind under the inspirations of God, convicts itself at once of inadequacy, if not of folly. And it is precisely because Christian Pantheism is under no such necessity,—because, while perfectly congruous with scientific truth, it gives to experience of divine communion all the value which the most transcendent faith has dared to claim,—that it seems to afford the brightest promise for the future of religion. The explanation of this will show how, in accordance with the suggestion made above, we measure back the path by which men have been led from the simplicity of humble affections to the contemplation of God as all in all; and so we may see how Christian Pantheism bridges, or rather annihilates, the apparent abyss between the inevitable conclusions of knowledge and the conscious reality of lowly faith.

I call that the most transcendent faith, which does not say in its heart "Who shall ascend into heaven for us?" nor "Who shall descend into the abyss?" but which finds God now "a very present help," and the ultimate reason for all sense of reality in life. Whoever can say with genuine meaning "we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God and eternal life," need not be troubled much about those sources of all religious uncertainty, "the

evidences,"—a name which we are sometimes tempted to think must have been given in diabolic irony, by the phantom who "for ever denies." Says the author of the "Theologia Germanica," "the more the Self, the I, the Me, the Mine, that is, self-seeking and selfishness, abate in a man, the more doth God's I, that is, God Himself increase in him." * And of such a man he says, "though all men were against him, they could neither shake nor trouble him, for while in this obedience a man were one with God, and God Himself were [one with] the man." † "Let man," says Tauler ‡ "simply yield himself to God; ask nothing, desire nothing; love and mean only God; yea, and such an *unknown* God. Let him lovingly cast all his thoughts and cares, and his sins too, as it were, on that unknown Will. Some will ask what remains after a man has thus lost himself in God? I answer, nothing but a fathomless annihilation of himself; an absolute ignoring of all reference to himself personally; of all aim of his own in will and heart, in way, in purpose, or in use. For in this self-loss, man sinks so deep, that if he could out of pure love and loveliness sink deeper, yea, and become absolutely nothing, he would do so right gladly. O, dear child! in the midst

* "Theologia Germanica," p. 52.

† Ibid. The brackets would seem to indicate that the words within them are doubtful. But there is no explanation given by the translator.

‡ Quoted by Rev. John Hunt, "Essay on Pantheism," p. 176.

of all these enmities and dangers, sink thou into thy ground and nothingness; and let the tower with all its bells fall upon thee; yea, let all the devils in hell storm out upon thee; let heaven and earth and all their creatures assail thee, all shall but marvellously serve thee; sink thou into thy nothingness, and the better part shall be thine." It is clear that the position described in these words is distinctly pantheistic; though it is the issue of devout contemplation rather than of reasoning. But how closely expressions of the religious affections may approximate to a more purely intellectual pantheism, is seen from the opening chapter of the "Theologia Germanica;" where the writer, commenting on St. Paul's words, expresses himself as follows,—"That which is perfect is a being who hath comprehended and included all things in himself and his own substance, and without whom and beside whom there is no true substance, and in whom all things have their substance." This is precisely Spinoza's idea of substance, only expressed from the stand-point of devotion rather than of philosophy. It is true that Spinoza insisted upon extension, as being equally with thought an essential attribute of the divine substance. And those who fail to remark that both thought and extension are only the utmost generalization of the two modes in which eternal being takes form in our finite consciousness, have too hastily charged Spinoza with making God and matter to be one. In a sense he does so, but it is not the

sense in which the objection is made. For those who are appalled by Spinoza's identification of God with matter, are usually oblivious of the fathomless mystery in which the essential nature of matter is involved. They think of matter as entirely explained by ultimate atoms, or by dead weight, and other hypothetically lifeless mechanical forces.

But when once it is clearly perceived that these notions are only modifications of our own consciousness by a cause that altogether transcends our knowledge, it is felt that the charge against Spinoza is meaningless. At the same time, with due reserve of what was said in a former essay about our resistless predisposition to regard eternal substance as akin to what we call mind, rather than to what we call matter, we may fairly acknowledge that Spinoza's idea of thought and extension, as equally essential attributes of the divine substance, is open to considerable objection. For both thought and extension are after all only generalizations of phenomena, and in their utmost breadth they remain phenomenal still. And so it seems to me that the mystical pantheism of religion is more consistent with a sound philosophy of ignorance, than are the ratiocinations of philosophy. "For," says the "Theologia Germanica," "the things which are in part can be apprehended, known and expressed; but the Perfect cannot be apprehended, known, or expressed by any creature as creature. Therefore we do not give a name to the Perfect, for it is none of these. The

creature *as creature** cannot know nor apprehend it, name nor conceive it." Still the demonstration of God belongs to philosophical, rather than to religious, pantheism. The necessity, lying in the very fact of present existence, for the thought of all Being as one, self-contained, and eternal, is of the intellect rather than of the heart, and belongs therefore to philosophy. The thought of one infinite Power, as the sum of all good, belongs more to the heart, and is generated by devotion. The two ideas are really one, and differ only in this respect: that the one aspect is that which first strikes the inquiring mind, and the other is that which first meets the longing heart. If now we can trace our way back, by known landmarks of spiritual experience, to the origin of religious pantheism in affections of the aspiring soul, we shall find additional evidence in favour of the claim of Christian Pantheism to bridge the apparently widening abyss between religion and science. Such expressions as we have quoted from mystic religionists show a very highly-

* The italics here are my own. The explanation of the paradox is given by the writer on a following page. "We mean it is impossible to the creature in virtue of its creature-nature, and qualities. that by which it saith, 'I' and 'myself.' For in whatsoever creature the Perfect shall be known, therein creature-nature. qualities, the I, the self, and the like must all be lost and done away. This is the meaning of that saying of St. Paul:— 'When that which is perfect is come' (that is, when it is known) 'then that which is in part' (to wit, creature-nature, qualities, the I, the self, the mine) will be despised and counted for nought." "Theol. Germ.," p. 4.

developed consciousness of relation to infinite power. That strange and lonely prerogative of man,—to reach forth longing arms from his self-centred life, to gather to himself a consciousness of all that is,—has, in these men, like all lordly prerogatives in noble souls, produced a deep and solemn sense of a possible ideal life. The world that glitters with the glory of God is not in itself the object of their love; for, magnificent as it is, it is but as an islet in a measureless sea. More than suns and stars is the eternal light of which they are but trembling beams; more than the hosts of creature life is that abyss of being that brings them forth. The creature spark of consciousness, which such men know in themselves, seems but the possibility of a larger joy to be found in a sense of nothingness amid the majesty of God. Now the aim described in words like these is undoubtedly vague and indefinite; but the general direction of desire is definite enough. For it is a longing to get free from the narrowness, the darkness, and impurity, which sincere reflection always associates with selfishness in all its forms. A great victory is felt to be gained, when love for friend or neighbour draws off attention from our own gratification to their deeper needs. But yet an exaggeration of their claims is soon found to conflict with the rights of others. For we have no right to set friend or neighbour above the highest interests of our kind; and any attempt to do so would be but a more subtle form of selfishness. Hence aspirants after the most enlarged devotion are

led to regard immediate objects of interest and affection only as representative of some wider sacredness, which embraces them and much else besides; nor can such a process stop, until self realizes its own nothingness amid the infinite sum of all sanctions and of all being. Suppose, for instance, that the "enthusiasm of humanity" be suggested as the widest reach of devotion; it must be inspired by the thought of man's true dignity; and that is inseparable from his littleness. For man is what he is, because he is the focus of innumerable forces, without and within, which play upon him out of a greater world; and no one can serve his own generation or his race aright, who either exaggerates the powers, or misconceives the prerogatives of man, amidst the energies of a boundless universe. For however great mankind may be, that greatness is after all maintained as much by a clear understanding of what we must not or cannot do, as by valiant effort to accomplish what we can. And no one therefore can do very noble service to humanity, who does not by his own example teach due reverence for the mysterious powers, by which human nature is held to its own place in the universal order. But the very notion of order involves an implicit belief, that all those overruling powers are ultimately One. It is impossible then that even to an age of Positivism "the enthusiasm of humanity" can prescribe the ultimate range of spiritual aspiration in our flight from the dominion of selfishness. For if a man's heart be so enlarged that

his desires are no longer the greed for personal gratification, but rather the most advanced expression of the growing ambition of a race, this very enlargement of heart will repudiate all human arrogance, and loyally own the beneficent sway of the grander if more mysterious Power, which directs the destiny of mankind. If any man could be so great, as indeed One, and One only was so great, as to gather up into his own soul a sense of all humanity's deepest needs, this Man of men, standing forth as the representative of all his kind, would feel that the one indispensable condition of human blessedness is not self-assertion or self-will, but loyal submission to the vast and sacred order which encloses mankind on every side. Such a man, impersonating all manhood, must find himself embraced and blessed and awed by a Majesty which he associates at once with law and with love; and he in his time would be a type to show that the sublimest act of the individual or of the race is one of sacrifice at the shrine of eternal Being. Of sacrifice, I say; not grudging, unloving, with a secret sense of tyrannous fate; but with an "Even so, Father;" and a peace which the world cannot give, reigning in the heart; and a cry, "It is finished," as the uttermost darkness merges in eternal light.*

* While these pages are passing through the press, I have read Mr. Spencer's eighth paper on "The Study of Sociology." (*Contemporary Review*, Feb., 1873.) What he says about the impossibility of carrying "the religion of altruism" to an ex-

By some such links of growing desire, expressed according to the forms of thought prevailing in their day, did those saintly mystics, of whom mention has been made, feel their way toward that blessedness which they identified with goodness; and of which they said it "lieth not in much and many, but in one

treme is perfectly just and sound. But, for myself, I cannot recognize altruism as a religion. Altruism concerns only my relations to known forms of individual life. It is another word for the enthusiasm of humanity. And were all our relations limited to mankind, Mr. Spencer may be quite right in saying that universal and unreserved self-sacrifice would result in absurdity. But surely the Universe is greater than mankind. And it is devotion to the Divine rule manifest in the order of the world, which is the true inspiration of self-sacrifice. Right order, or divine law, must decide whither I play my part in the universe best by killing an enemy or letting him kill me. It is only that ideal life—God in me—which can demand of the baser self a sacrifice absolutely without reserve. The heroic Captain Knowles, of the unfortunate "Northfleet," might not have been justified in declining all chance of escape only that he might comfort the women and children around him, by going to the bottom with them. But when that brave man said, "Bo'sen, I'm going to my work right through up here," he showed that, to his mind, there were no bounds to the sacrifices which might be demanded by "his work," or in other words, his mission, his place in the divine order of the world. Mr. Spencer balances "the religion of amity" against "the religion of enmity," allowing some truth in each, and suggesting a *compromise* between them. Surely there must be some one principle underlying the truths of both. And this, I venture to think, is what I have stated in the text. A man who feels himself a divine element in a divine order, will assert himself and deny himself equally in a spirit of sacrifice.

and oneness." "In one word," they said, "blessedness lieth not in any creature, or work of the creatures, but it lieth alone in God, and in his works. Therefore I must wait only on God and his work, and leave on one side all creatures with their works, and first of all myself." * Yes; "first of all myself;" there the growth in grace began: but it could not stop with the "enthusiasm of humanity," though that was embraced under another name. The man who is "enlightened with the true light" "longeth for the salvation of all men." But this is only one expression of the comprehensive loyalty in which such men "commit and commend themselves and all things to the Eternal Goodness. Nevertheless, there remaineth in them a desire to go forward and get nearer to the Eternal Goodness; that is, to come to a clearer knowledge, and warmer love, and more comfortable assurance, and perfect obedience and subjection; so that every enlightened man could say; 'I would fain be to the Eternal Goodness, what his own hand is to a man.' This mind was in Christ to perfection, and is also in his followers, in some more, and in some less." †

But if we consider further, and more in detail, the feeble beginnings of this spiritual life to which the mystics gave so daring a consummation, we find that they are identical with the inner struggle realized by every man who knows the conflict between an actual worse, and a possible better life. And this conflict is

* Theol. Germ., ch. ix. † Theol. Germ., ch. x.

generated by a sense of responsibility, vague or definite, ennobling or repressive, according to the degrees of distinctness and spirituality with which the man has realized to himself a theory of the universe. If he thinks of the world as governed by a manlike King, veiled only by the clouds or firmament, seated on a throne, and launching thunderbolts upon the wicked; he may have a very definite impression that there is one stronger than himself, who prohibits him from doing as he likes. But the coarseness of the conception will most probably keep his code of morality low, and his practice considerably below that. Criminals under a Draconian law are not generally refined by its terrors; and however fearful the penalties, there are always plenty of men found to risk them. If, on the other hand, a man thinks the world subject to a more distant and mysterious Sovereign, who keeps a debtor and creditor account with mankind, but delays the final settlement until some far-off day; such a man cannot be charged with vagueness of theory, so far as it goes; and he will in all probability have a very real feeling of responsibility. But the distance of the settlement always encourages him to think that something will occur to set it right in time. If a man thinks the world to be ruled by a superhuman Love, pictured to him in images of human perfection, he will realize a purer loyalty, which raises his ideal, while it deepens his sense of responsibility. Again, if a man conceives that the order of the world is ade-

quately explained by the word law, and that law signifies nothing more than the regular action of mechanical force; he will indeed endeavour to square his life by the rules gathered from a process of induction; but the expansiveness and the imaginative aspiration of devotion must be wanting. If a man feels that human life, like all phenomena of the world around him, is the fragmentary manifestation of a Universal Power which shows itself within as well as without, in inspirations of right thoughts and holy desires, as well as in organic forms; he may know that his supreme good is realized in the conscious and glad subordination of all self-centred life to "the glory of the sum of things."

All these men may know the struggle between the lower and the higher life. But its issue in each case must be dependent, to a considerable extent, on the degree of elasticity or expansiveness, characteristic of the theory with which it is associated. Thus he who conceives of a divine monarch armed with thunderbolts, will be satisfied with a halting obedience, eked out by acts of propitiation. The man who believes only in mechanical forces, will hold his consciousness of free will to be only an illusion; and while inconsistently stung at times by vexation with himself, he will, for the most part, confine his struggles for self-reform to efforts, perhaps equally inconsistent, for a re-arrangement of the circumstances around him. But they who believe in the ruling and redeeming love of a supreme

Father of mankind, may find the horizon of devotion recede as they advance, until even so beautiful an analogy pales by reason of "a glory that excelleth." And their aspirations will often merge in that vision of the "Eternal Goodness" which we have seen to be only another aspect of the philosophical pantheist's absolute Being. "A master called Boetius"—I quote the words once more from the "Theologia Germanica"—saith, 'It is of sin that we do not love that which is best.' He hath spoken the truth. That which is best should be dearest of all things to us." . . . . "But if our inward man were to make a leap, and spring into the Perfect, we should find and taste how that the Perfect is without measure, number, or end, better and nobler than all which is imperfect and in part, and the Eternal above the temporal or perishable, and the fountain or source above all that floweth or ever can flow from it." Now this "love of that which is best" may have at first a very humble form. It may be a child's choice of a generous action rather than selfish gratification. It may be a youth's ambition to imitate, cost what it may, some life of devoted adventure which he has read. But while the soul lives a growing life, this love has power to expand, till like the hero of Lucretius it "ranges beyond the flaming walls of the world." And in this expansion every moral conflict, every agony of doubt, every earnest heartfelt prayer exerts a germinating force. For he who would reign in this divine life must also suffer in its birth and

growth. And the mystic's hell and heaven * are surely far more real than those of superstition. The lowly Christian, charmed by the music of holy words, is wooed to a bondage of the letter, which may be long in making its tyranny felt. But sooner or later, unless his mind is stagnant, the iron is sure to enter into his soul. The inconsistency between the letter of many commands and the needs of modern life, will perhaps force him at last into the freedom of the spirit of Christ. But the resolve ever to cleave to the love of what is best, whatever ugly names may be cast on it by men, will often give to lower affections for tradition, and custom, and law, a wrench which may seem to dislocate the whole framework of his being. And when once he takes refuge in the freedom of the spirit of Christ, he may find his first dim notions of that spirit grow, until he realizes it as a consciousness of God which outweighs all self-centred desire. "And then, when the man neither careth for, nor seeketh, nor desireth anything but the Eternal Good alone, and seeketh not himself, nor his own things, but the honour of God only, he is made a partaker of all manner of joy, bliss, peace, rest, and consolation, and so the man is henceforth in the Kingdom of Heaven." † To all but those of like susceptibility to mystical and ecstatic devotion, there may seem to be something of exaggeration in the last words here. Yet all are capable of the peace springing from surrender to Infinite Power; or

* Theol. Germ., chap. xi. † Theol. Germ., ch. xi.

from that forgetfulness of self in the glory of the world, which owns that something far better than our own will is being secured. And this is quite enough to give a meaning that borders on, if it does not merge in, spiritual pantheism.

Thus we see that the connection between pantheism and some of the most devotional forms of Christianity is by no means strained or unnatural. "Faith as vague as all unsweet!" some may be tempted to exclaim. But the very energy of the language,—nay, the saintliness of the lives—of these old mystics, shows that if their idea of "Eternal Goodness" was vague in the sense of indefinite, it was a vagueness like that of noonday blaze; while their faith, in the sense of loyalty of soul, was hardly less intense than Elijah's prophetic fire. They, even much more than Spinoza, were "God-intoxicated men;" in as far as their pantheism was emotional rather than intellectual. They found God within as well as without. He was to them subject as well as object. He was the deeper holier self, as well as the substance of all outward things. That background of our personal life to which, as is elsewhere remarked, no definite boundaries can be marked, was felt by these men to merge in God. The consciousness of God was regarded as a more abiding reality than the consciousness of the creature-self; it was the eternal, as contrasted with the temporal life. It was in reference to this they maintained, that ignorance of the Infinite belongs only to the soul *as a creature;*

and that "in whatsoever creature the Perfect shall be known, therein creature-nature qualities,—the I, the self, and the like must be lost and done away." To them in rapt meditation it seemed that a Life, from beyond the creature-self inwardly, met, and touched, and mingled with the reality underlying the vision of the world outwardly; and so self was lost in God. I cannot help thinking that they anticipated a development of man's religious life, which is yet perhaps a long way before us. The supreme consciousness of God seems the proper aim of all spiritual progress; and all mankind will reach it yet. But the times were not ripe then, as perhaps they are not ripe now; and antedated ideas are always imperfect, and more or less incongruous. The old mystic idea of the Perfect, or of Eternal Goodness, might be the last issue of unselfish aspiration. But also, from its very vagueness, it was constantly in danger of confusion with meditative self-satisfaction. For a man may very easily think he has resigned all self-will and self-assertion, when in reality he has only resigned all manly effort and definiteness of purpose. But again the position of these mystics was incongruous. For, while using language which clearly involved pantheism, they did not distinctly avow it. There was a sort of hesitancy and uncertainty, which arose probably from their indeterminate position in regard to external authority over religious opinion. And in such a period nothing else was to be expected. But now it is

impossible for any, but lazy or fearful souls, to toy with mystic notions such as these, without asking precisely what is their relation to the supposed authoritative teaching, if not of the Church, at least of Scripture. In a previous part of this volume, the answer to such a question has already been implied. Christian faith does not consist in agreement with authoritative opinion. Still, there must be a marked continuity of spiritual life, to justify the maintenance of the name; and we have yet to show how the general abandonment of infallibility, as an impossible predicate either of Pope, Church, or Book, has done much to open the way for a genuinely Christian pantheism.

But it is better to dwell for a moment now on that other point of weakness in the contemplations of the mystics,—the danger of confusion between self-abandoning devotion and indolent self-content. This danger arose from their dwelling too exclusively on subjective, rather than objective suggestions of the Infinite. They knew too little of the outward world, its beauty, its mystery, its order, its ever-increasing purpose. The modern mind marches on lines of law, till each is lost in a higher rule that is incomprehensible, but felt to be order still. The mystic could not approach the Infinite so. The widening aspirations of love, combined with a sense of ontological mystery, brought them to a vague idea of supreme blessedness, too generally negative in its characteristics to escape comparison with the Buddhist Nirvâna. But our position is very

different. For, however inferences from our physical knowledge may threaten opinions hitherto supposed to be bound up with the immortality of reverence, the visions which that knowledge gives of the magnificence, the complexity, the unceasing activity and exhaustless energy of creation do overpower the soul with emotions of true veneration. We are not, therefore, so much dependent as the mystics were on the dreaminess of inward contemplation. We must still, indeed, say with the sage of old:—"Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him!"* But the greatness of that little is awful. It is like the skirts of the vision that passed by Moses in the cleft. It shuts us up in the darkness of our own ignorance; and yet it makes us feel that the darkness is something more,—the shadow of a present divinity. Farther, the modern method of observing the world ought to give more practical significance to our feeling towards the Supreme Object of devotion, than could be given by any abstraction of eternal goodness. For though the infinite is as far off as ever from our mortal conception, yet we are learning to look at the laws of nature with a reverence that recognizes the stamp of divinity upon them. And as those laws, which we know and can read, are manifestly intertwined with higher laws beyond our comprehension, we feel that the known is as sacred as the unknown, while at the same time it gives us articulate instructions how to

* Job xxvi. 14.

turn life to worship. The mystics said,—Put off the creature, put off self, the I, the me, the mine. They did not tell us what we should put on; at least not in language accommodated to the needs of life. But our modern pantheist, whose religion has found freedom, not death, in the revelations of science, must conceive the life of God as the sum of all the energies of creation; whole and complete, because each apparent part or fragmentary force is, as it were, steadfastly loyal in its place and work. And putting on one side now the mystery involved in phenomenal personality and will, of which we have spoken elsewhere, such a man may say, "I am not my own; I am needed, or I should not be here; for each thing serves all else: my life's work is to play my part according as the divine forces without and within me teach; not for myself, but for the widest good that I can conceive." He feels that though the widest good he can conceive falls unspeakably short of an infinite beatitude, yet his conception, if realized, would be an embodiment of a divine thought. And therefore that widest conceivable good is to him a real, though necessarily imperfect manifestation, of the supreme object of devotion. Such a view of our relations to the Infinite is not indeed enough to give that strong sense of divine communion—that intense glow of devout feeling—which belongs to the life of God in the soul of man; but it is well calculated to convert vague sentiment into practical power. We must not lose the inspirations from within; they are

most real and true; and amidst all metaphysical puzzles about the value of prayer, it proves its power by their continual renewal. But still it stands good, that modern perceptions of the unity, wonder, and transcendental vastness of the material world, give to pantheistic devotion an articulate consciousness, such as it could scarcely have amongst the mystics.

What we mean then, generally, by Christian Pantheism, is that theory of the world which, while acknowledging that human thought and language are not articulately expressive of anything more than phenomenal knowledge, yet sees in phenomena the fragmentary and partial manifestations of an unutterable unity beyond them. Nor is this unity merely negative, merely the abstraction of this or that creature form. It is the sense of all that is; and that, not in the sense of an aggregate, but in the sense of Absolute Being; the only real unity. Of that unity we have already confessed human inability to speak with adequate significance; still, as it underlies all our thoughts, we are obliged to speak of it as we can. And as it is the sum of all beauty, goodness, power, we may well use such words as carry our thoughts farthest towards infinite perfection. If our noblest words and thoughts are inadequate, it does not follow that others should be used; for this by hypothesis would make the incongruity greater. Our thoughts of personal life, of will, and counsel, and love,

and mercy, and justice, are the warmest and brightest that we know. It is inevitable therefore that in the grandest forms they can assume they should be transferred to our dreams of the Absolute Being, whom we call God. And though it be proved, as proved it is, that God must be infinitely *more* than can be expressed by such thoughts or words, it does not follow that others should be used; for these would make Him to be almost infinitely *less*. Here is the fallacy besetting the alternative which haunts so many minds with dread. "Either," say they, "the Supreme Power is a personal being, or the world is the creature of mechanical forces governed by blind fate." Then, when the limitations essentially involved in Personality are seen to be inconsistent with infinity, they fall into dire distress; forgetting that the other alternative is equally inconsistent with the thought of Absolute Being, and far more incongruous with the sum of all Perfection. But the alternative has no force whatever, except what it derives from the fact that personal life and mechanical force mark certain extremes, within which our experience varies in the phenomenal world. And while the laws of thought, themselves a part of the universal order, compel us to think of one Absolute Being as the ultimate reality of the phenomenal world; they also forbid our regarding this Being as identical with, or fully manifested by, any mere class of impressions. Our only resource therefore is to use, with all due and reverent reserve,

such language as may carry our thoughts farthest towards infinite perfection.

Again, Christian Pantheism assumes, of course, that no phenomenon carries its explanation within itself. And what is meant by an explanation here is such an analysis as reduces the object to known elements, and enables us in imagination to reproduce the phenomenon out of those elements, with a satisfactory sense of completeness. Thus the apparent movements of the stars and planets are said to be explained, when their apparently chaotic wanderings are shown to be the impression produced on us by the revolution of the earth on her axis, together with that of the planets round the sun. The ancients sought the explanation within the limits of the appearance itself, by conceiving a hierarchy of concentric heavens. But no description of these could be given which would enable the imagination fairly to reproduce the whole appearance out of such elements. Thus the explanation had to be sought outside the appearance, in something not seen, but inferred. Again, when the motions of the earth and planets round the sun were seen to be the true explanation of celestial appearances, then these motions themselves were felt to require explanation; and this explanation also was found, not within the limits of the phenomenon itself, but in experience of weight at the surface of the earth. Then the phenomenon of mutual attraction between masses is felt to require explanation. And this it has never

received, unless Descartes' hypothesis of revolving vortices be accepted. But in any case, the phenomenon does not carry its own explanation within it. Farther, if the vortical theory should be adopted, and if gravitation were held to be rather the resistance of superincumbent pressure to a centrifugal tendency, than the direct inter-attraction of separate masses, we should then want to know what originated or sustains the vortical movements that generate the centrifugal force. Thus *assuming* the earth's axial revolution and the planetary orbits,—elements which lie altogether outside the *visible* movements to be explained,—men, who combine imagination with mathematical skill, can reproduce out of such elements, with a sense of entire completeness, the apparent movements of the stars. But a feeling of incompleteness haunts the assumption. For the *real* movements of the earth and planets also require explanation. And when this is sought in experience of weight, another unknown element is introduced. While, if it be supposed that the feeling and the laws of weight can be satisfactorily reproduced by imagination from the assumption of revolving vortices, a new if not a larger problem is introduced in the recognition of everlasting motion, suggestive of eternal power. This may seem only another way of saying that no phenomenon is ever completely explained; but something a little more positive than that is meant. For every phenomenon is very completely explained by the assumption of an

unknown quantity. Thus the Newtonian scheme of the physical universe assumes an utterly unaccountable force, about which all we know is, that it operates according to a certain invariable law. There are, it may be, those who think that Descartes' vortices would explain the real nature of this force, as the resultant of a centrifugal nisus and resisting pressure. But this, of course, would be the transmutation of one unknown into another. And that is the uniform condition of all scientific explanation. For every observer explains the problem of another, by discovering a new one himself. Now pantheism would suggest that this unknown element is always, and everywhere, the same. The omnipresent impossibility of either distinguishing or identifying phenomenon and substance, momentary vibration and eternal energy, leaves, after every explanation, a sense of want which only reverence can satisfy. As a child is not only guided to the ocean by a shell-strewn path, but finds each shell that he can apply to his ear eloquent in memories of the moaning wind and tide; so the grown man needs not to trace the links of phenomenal causation out into a distant infinite; for every wonder that catches his eye has in it an unfathomable mystery declaring the present God. He does not need to scan the farthest reach of astronomical discovery, in order to reach the bounds of knowledge; for the commonest pebble he picks up in his path is the manifestation of inscrutable forces.

And the pantheistic position is, that everything is ultimately inexplicable simply because no finite creature can realize in consciousness that absolute unity, the fragmentary manifestations of which make the phenomenal world. But if we might suppose a consciousness embracing the whole universe in its totality or unity, this consciousness would be able to comprehend its complexity; and could deduce from its experience of reality every phenomenal appearance. Such a consciousness is the nearest approximation that pantheism can make, intellectually, to the apprehension of God. It is of course only an approximation; because it is after an analogy suggested by finite life. Still it is an approximation that we are driven to make; because the reality of that ultimate unity being granted, it is impossible for us to leave it an infinite void.

And farther, since "everything beautiful in its season" is only a partial manifestation of the one infinite glory, we may well direct our inevitable thoughts of this into the way of thinking it indefinitely more beautiful and good than anything we know. Say, we are tossing in a tiny boat on waves that roll toward cliffs that rise in a majestic silence overpowering the harsh music of sea birds, and the deep bass of the ocean's roar; and far aloft there sails a delicate cloud telling of peace and rest in the high places of eternal thought. What we feel, it may be we cannot speak. But power, steadfast power, and

passionless power, power drowning all fretful noise, and framed in the intangible grace of a placid sky, stands out the witness of we know not what, but transcendently grander than what we see. Or say, we are floating on a smooth sliding river beset with overhanging woods, with now and then a bold precipitous rock, and there, closing the perspective, a castle tower that gleams in the setting sun. How deep and living seems the bosom of the earth, in which the vision, like a great and happy emotion, rests! Who can cut it out, like a child's picture, to be pasted in the scrap-book of memory, without feeling that, severed from the universal life which swells in its foliage, and lisps in its half-heard ripple, it shrivels like a withered leaf? Or say, we take in polluted hands the snowdrop, whose ineffable purity seems first to burn and then to soothe; and we look between the tender white curtains, where lie the children of wonder, the germs of another spring, whose secret none can learn. Can a blanched speck of space touch the heart like this? Surely it is an angel of the resurrection, which tells of the power of an endless life. When Shelley listened to the skylark, and learned from it one of the sweetest songs he ever sang, did he hear only a feathered thing that shook the air by the mechanical energy of its throat? As a light, struck in a dark, but treasure-laden cavern, loses itself instantly in the splendours it reveals, so the bird became the luminous centre of a world of thought in which it disappeared.

"All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflow'd.

"Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view."

Surely that bird's song is like a sudden note struck in a hall of harps, revealing by its echoes the depth of music which the silence shrouds. The creature seems to rouse the very soul of things by its heart-piercing call; and the universe is felt to be bound together in a harmony, which one little earnest voice can waken into responsive meaning. That music fills heaven and earth with tenderness, with solemnity, with triumph, haunted by nameless sorrow, that yet will fight with death.

"Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

"We look before and after,
We pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought."

I must believe that the soul of all being, the life of our life, spoke to the poet then; and told him,—though even he had not ears to hear all the meaning,—how every vision of creation's beauty overflows with a fulness, that is even more concealed than revealed by phenomenal form. And it is because of this, that the last line quoted touches a chord of memory so eloquent in the experience of all. For if "our sweetest songs tell of saddest thought," the sweetness comes of infinite light; the sadness from the narrowness of the rift through which it streams. Why do tears rise to our eyes when our joy is keenest in poetic words? And why do nature's fairest scenes, untouched by any human sorrow, stir us to unutterable pathos? Surely the reason is a latent sense of impotence to reach the fulness which is hinted at by the radiant spray flung over the barrier of darkness. The beauty that we hear and see involves an infinity which we cannot grasp; and so, the thought of what we have not mingles a pang of sadness with the sweetness of what we have. And, conversely, songs that tell of loss and disappointment and sorrow have all some memory of a goodness or a love, that cannot die because it is the utterance of eternal life. The special form is gone now; but the meaning it gave to the world remains.

"Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess ;
But though I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less :

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now ;
Though mix'd with God and nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more."

Only the pantheism, which looks through the creature, and worships the Eternal Goodness as the unimagined fulness from which the fairness of the creature flows, can give adequate meaning to such emotions of the heart. For so each creature, good or beautiful, is felt to be so interlocked with the whole frame of things, that it always appears as though striving to utter more than itself; and this inarticulate "more" has an expansiveness, that never lets the imagination rest short of the infinite power which, if it could be known, would explain everything. Thus it comes to pass that, set in the background of eternity, the vision, like an illuminated palace in the night, spreads a halo far around itself, and tinges the infinite with a radiance, which is not like this or that bright object, but is the confused glory of all.

It may, indeed, be said that this wonderful charm of the physical world is of no spiritual significance; that it means only a congruity between our sensational susceptibilities, and the power of eternal causes to make impressions upon us. But what do we mean

by congruity? Manifestly, in plain words, that the one fits the other. But this no one denies for a moment. The question before us now is not whether that is the case or not; but rather what is the significance of the effect which, as a matter of fact, is produced by this congruity? The outer world so fits our sensational susceptibilities, as to excite emotions which expand altogether beyond their immediate object, and see in it the inadequate expression of something unutterable. Now, if it is meant that all the effect produced, over and above the mere fact of congruity, is absolutely meaningless, this involves a theory of the world already repudiated in this volume, and with which we need trouble ourselves no farther. For when closely examined it will amount simply to the assertion,—that inward vibrations of nerve synchronize with outward vibrations of matter, so as to produce a pleasing sensation of agreement. It is needless here to reiterate what, already in other forms, we have repeatedly insisted on: but the sensation itself is something over and above the synchronism. Suffice it, that unless we go plumb down to materialism of the grossest kind, we must hold that the emotions, produced in us by the relation of our susceptibilities to the excitements of the outer world, must have some adequate and truthful meaning. Nor is it possible to assign any meaning more congruous on the whole with the first principles of philosophy, and with experiential common sense, than that which has been

claimed. It may be said that, the possibilities of feeling being indefinite, each emotion carries within it the suggestion of a greater emotion of the same kind. But not to say anything of the admission, here involved, of some relation between human consciousness, that knows no bounds, and infinity, which transcends their possibility,—the description is not applicable to some of the highest experiences immediately in question. It is not the possibility of yet greater emotion, which makes sea-crags towering over foaming waves so impressive; it is rather the feeling of an unutterable power, to which no emotion is adequate. When a man so feels the overpowering beauty of the Apollo Belvedere that tears start to his eyes, it is not the indefinite possibilities of emotion which make him weep; but the touch of a perfection suggestive of an eternal ideal, one with the supreme glory, and striking the heart with a sense at once of unworthiness and insignificance. Or wherever forms or sounds of beauty stir feelings too deep for utterance, the only adequate reason is that the soul seems led behind the veil, and confronted with the essential oneness of the world's mystery. It may be a momentary glimpse, an evanescent joy, not revocable by the will; but there comes to each a moment when

> "The glory of the sum of things
> Will flash along the chords and go."

Thus Christian Pantheism sees God in everything;

and is taught, in part by the beauty of the world, to think of Him as the splendour of all things, gathered into unity, and expanded to infinite totality. So far as this, other modes of regarding God may, by ignoring latent fallacies already exposed, lay claim to an equality. But there is another aspect, in which pantheism stands manifestly alone and unrivalled in its adaptation to the spiritual requirements of the age. For if there is one demand more intolerable than another, to any expanded realization of this glorious universe, it is an insistance on the conception of an absolute beginning of things. How this is involved in the assumption of the existence of any real substance other than the being of God, we have already seen, and the contradiction of creation out of nothing has been repudiated as unendurable. But it is not only because of this contradiction, that the doctrine of creation out of nothing is repugnant. The necessity also of supposing eternal energy to be quiescent until the work began, has often been shown to be repellant, but is now felt to be most painfully incongruous. Here it is quite plain that an intellectual choice has to be made. If we hold the doctrine of creation out of nothing, we assume a position which, up to a certain point, is perfectly clear and intelligible. Within those limits, any appeal to transcendental mystery to stave off the force of argument, is utterly illegitimate. In fact, such an appeal would really involve some form of the pantheistic theory. On the common doctrine of

creation then, we must believe that an eternal Being, living in loneliness, called out of nothing a substance, or substances, which were not Himself; and out of these he proceeded to elaborate a world, the temporal succession of which contrasts with His eternity, and its finite bounds with His infinity. On this theory there is no escaping the inference that the universe, which is all we directly know of being, had its point of absolute beginning. There was a moment, in which the first trace of created substance dawned out of nothingness into existence. Beyond that moment, we must think of eternal energy as quiescent. It does not indeed follow that this earth, or the solar system, or this corner of the universe constituted by its birth the absolute beginning. It is perfectly open to any one holding this view to say, that there were creations before this, and other creations before those; but it is *not* open to him to add, "and so on *ad infinitum*." For this last would only be a confused way of attributing to the universe the eternity of God. Nor, when he is confronted with the monstrous character of his assumption reduced to naked literality, has he any right to say; "this is a mystery; and I do not attempt to explain it." For had he not attempted to explain it, he would have left things as they are, and been content with the pantheistic view, within the scope of which there comes neither beginning nor end.

Before carrying this point farther, however, it is as well to observe that the same objection lies, though

more indirectly, against the mode in which the theory of evolution is sometimes presented. For that is shown to mean, for instance, that the whole solar system, with all its myriad varieties of existence and movement, has been evolved from a nebula, supposed to exhibit "an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity." But this is a process which we are obliged to conceive as begun, continued, and consummated—that is brought to its present state,—in time. Now, if we are to trace back, not the solar system only, but the whole physical universe, to an indefinite nebula, from which all worlds have been born, and have grown up by an all-comprehensive evolution, approximately contemporary in its stages; it is manifest that on this theory also, the notion of an absolute beginning seems at first sight inevitable. For what existed before the faintest nebula? The answer may indeed be, "the substance which we call Absolute Being; out of which the nebula dawned and the worlds grew up." But even so, the idea that the Absolute Being should be rapt in dateless quiescence, and should then wake to activity in a nebulous form, is as repugnant as that of a Creator who, after an eternity of lonely stillness, should start into working energy. Or it may be said, that what is really indicated is not an absolute beginning; but rather alternate cycles of universal evolution, and universal dissolution, for ever succeeding one another. But this too has in it an element of grotesqueness painful to reverent contemplation. And besides, one would

think—though on this point I speak more than ever with the diffidence of ignorance—that such a theory would be inconsistent with any thorough doctrine of the conservation of force. For if we conceive all existing forces dissipated in a universal heat,—which, by hypothesis, cannot be diminished by radiation, and is rendered thoroughly equable by diffusion,—it is impossible to imagine evolution recommencing without the "deus ex machina" which it is the very object of the theory to avoid. But if the nebula is not to be regarded as infinite; if there is space or matter beyond, into which it can radiate its heat; then it is not the whole universe of power. And accordingly, either we must fall back on the abandoned creation theory; or we must conceive a sphere of evolution contemporaneous with that of dissolution, and imagine the two processes to be intermingled or contrasted for ever. This last, though not in so crude a form, is the hypothesis of pantheism.

Why should we think of a universe decaying, waxing old, or ready to vanish away? Why should we conceive it ever soft with infantine plasticity, or vague with the feebleness of babyhood? True it is, devout imagination has with awful delight pictured the heavens as passing away like a scroll, and the elements melting with fervent heat. True, prophetic genius has never sung with sweeter wildness than when predicting that

> "like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind."

But then the speaker is most naturally made to add;

> "We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vex'd—"

Yes; it is the vexations of our little life that make lovely the stillness of death. And notwithstanding devout examples, susceptible of a different interpretation, it is not so much loyalty to divine predispositions, as the eager self-assertion, "sowing self on every wind," which leads us to predict for the great universe a ruin comparable to our own death. For after all, in moods of sublimest melancholy, the truest souls have seen, behind all phenomenal succession, an abiding verity of eternal power. And this to them has been no abstraction, no voiceless, heartless silence, but the "fulness of Him that filleth all in all." It is not ghostly mystery only, that abides; but "a new heaven and a new earth," and "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal," and "the tree of life," and "the sea of glass," and "the glory and honour of the nations." As to that which passes and changes, it is like the flickerings on the face of the sun, which leave his orb in quenchless splendour still. This pathetic ranging

of thought—from human mortality to universal change, and through the superficial change to the everlasting might of a universe that cannot die because it is the very glory of God—is nobly set forth with true devoutness in the prayer of the psalmist. "O my God take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same and thy years shall have no end."* Here what seems to the dying eye to be perishing is, by the immortal spirit, seen again as a vision of change, that does not obscure, but declare, the eternal life of God. We may "look for, and hasten unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. *Nevertheless* we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."† But after all, such expectations of cataclysm are little more than expressions of noble discontent with the moral imperfections of the present state; and they affected only a petty fragment of the stupendous realm which the telescope has opened up to us. We talk at times, and we talk wisely,—though the words are edged by fear,—of the

* Psalm cii. † 2 Peter, iii. 12.

monstrous incongruity which man would be, if all the significance of his life must be shut up between birth and death. But who, after thinking, till his brain reels, of the vastness of the spaces where worlds are strewn like dust, can ever dream of an utter end to this magnificence? Who that contemplates the steadfast solemnity of natural order, the expression of eternity in forms of time, can fancy that the day will ever come when gravitation shall cease to work, or light to radiate, or life to throb through sensuous form? Or who—that knows the spell of the transcendent unity, which suggests the thought of a *universe*, one, complete, total, immovable, while all within it moves,—can think of all that seems, as other than the everlasting vision of that which is?

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains;
Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns?"

And therefore there is no beginning; and all cosmogonies are vain. Never was space a desert, formless and void; never was the firmament empty of stars. Never was the universe barren of creature life; or becalmed in icy stillness, untouched by the restlessness of finite joy. Never was eternal light unbroken into fragmentary radiance; nor infinite Power without its manifestation in finite forces. Growth and decay, evolution and dissolution are but forms, in which the riches of infinity are made sensible to our finite consciousness; the apparent

sparkling of a star, which contracts and dilates, now dark now bright to us, but in itself changelessly the same. Not that we should doubt or undervalue the reality of the outer world, which is in truth far more real than it seems. But while its unity and totality are to us only a sense of something unutterable, transcending all perceptions and every combination of them, our thoughts have an impression of variety, the orderliness of which is a hint, or faint expression, of the unattainable oneness of the reality. The relation of alternate growth and decay to the everlasting fulness, which they do not change, is of course only vaguely conceived by us under such images as have been used. But we are far more certain of the oneness and endurance underlying the vision of the world, than we are of our correct estimate of any separate phenomena. Farther, death and life are always contending before our eyes; culmination and decay are always going on; but we are convinced there is no change in the sum of all energies. And therefore, though, as we have said, pantheism makes no pretence to explain everything, yet it has this advantage, that it accepts the world as it is, as an eternal expression of God: not our knowledge of the world; nor our idea of the world; but that fulness, to the perception of which mankind have ever been approximating. In this view we are untroubled by the taunts that are often uttered about the impossibility of any theory concerning the origin of the universe. We do not want any theory of the kind.

Indeed, we need not suppose it to have any origin at all, except the mutual dependence of each so-called part upon every other, and upon the supreme totality of things. Taking up, for instance, Mr. Herbert Spencer's "three verbally intelligible suppositions,"* each of which he criticizes as untenable; we find that we need none of them. We need not think of the universe as "self-existing." We only know that it exists, and that it impresses us as everlasting. The metaphysical difficulty of conceiving "existence without a beginning" does not trouble us, so long as we insist on the actual fact of existence, and abstain from the thought of a beginning. The impossibility of "conceiving existence through infinite past time" will not appal us; for we are not going to try. The phenomenal succession which gives the sense of time must belong to our phenomenal life alone, and is therefore utterly inapplicable to eternal being. Again, "the hypothesis of self-creation," says Mr. Spencer,† "which practically amounts to what is called pantheism, is similarly incapable of being represented in thought." But, with all deference to so great a thinker, surely pantheism has nothing to do with "self-creation." "The precipitation of invisible vapour into cloud" would not for one moment delude us, as he suggests, with the notion that we had "formed a symbolic conception of a self-evolved universe." For the notion of any absolute beginning, whether called "self-evolved" or anything

* "First Principles," p. 30. † Op. cit. p. 32.

else, seems totally inconsistent with genuine pantheism. As Mr. Spencer truly observes; "we cannot form any idea of a potential existence of the universe, as distintinguished from its actual existence." Nor, I would add, are we under the slightest necessity to do so. But if it should be asked, what then becomes of the Synthetic Philosophy, or where is the place of evolution?—we may venture to reply; evolution is the impression produced on the observing mind, within a limited area, by the phenomenal succession which begins in vagueness, and ends in definiteness, unity, and orderly relations, involving a transcendent totality. On the other hand, dissolution is the impression produced by a phenomenal succession which, beginning in apparent unity, goes off into vagueness, and is suggestive of absorption. Both sets of phenomenal successions exist. And the fact that the first seems to predominate over the second, is probably owing to that grandest and most mysterious evolution of all,—the gradual awakening of mankind to the interest of the vision of the world. For

> "The ear of man cannot hear; and the eye of man cannot see.
> Yet if we could see and hear, this vision,—were it not He?"

So far, I have spoken of the frank recognition of facts, of the self-control, the sense of undeniable mystery, and the reverence for actual existence as expressive of an eternal unity, all of which should characterize Christian Pantheism. But, still it may

be asked, why Christian? To that question let us address ourselves more closely now. For though we have seen how some of the most devout Christian souls have implied in the expression of their feelings, an essentially pantheistic theory of the world, it is more than probable that few, if any of them, recognized their own position; and none of them owned the apparent incongruities between their opinions and ordinary theological dogmatism. But are not such incongruities more than apparent? Are they not fatal? Whatever be the case with physical miracle, at least the reality of Divine communion may be recognized as essential to Christianity. Apocalyptic visions may have been dreams. But if the whole stream of inspiration that generated the life of the Church was nothing but delusion, the Christianity left is hardly more than a beautiful corpse. We may fully admit the weight of the difficulties urged from this point of view; and readily acknowledge that Christianity without inspiration is dead. But I contend that the existence of inspiration, past or present, is very much a question of fact, which, apart from infallibility, by no means involves the theological theories usually associated with it. I believe Divine communion to be a fact both present and past. But this does not in the least degree affect my conviction that the usual interpretations put upon the relation of God to the world are untenable. And though I believe the relation of the Supreme Being to phenomenal exisence

to be utterly inscrutable, I contend that the pantheistic position is not at all inconsistent with a practical and grateful recognition of Divine inspiration.

In regard to this aspect of the subject, then, the first point on which we should insist is the pregnant significance which seems to lie in man's *consciousness* of his relation to the Infinite. The familiar distinction between human cognitions and animal perceptions, to the effect that though "the ox knoweth his master's crib" he does not know that he knows it, has a good deal of rough suggestiveness. This impossibility of "knowing that he knows" prevents the accumulation of knowledge in the beast; it also suggests an incapacity for any striking sense of contrast between self and the world, and therefore for any consciousness of relation thereto. But where such a feeling of the contrast between self and not-self arises, it almost inevitably expands, as I have urged elsewhere, into a consciousness of relation to the Infinite. Man must needs worship; because the greatness and mystery of existence, as well as a growing sense of oneness in the world, overpower his thought. But now if the object of his adoration, however faintly recognized at first, is really absolute Being, the Majesty of the All in All, it behoves us to remember that the man himself is a phenomenal manifestation of the Supreme Life no less than is the world around him. And if it be asked here how can the sense of contrast arise,—I have only to answer, I do not know. It is at present one of our

ultimate facts, of which apparently no explanation can be given; and from the mere operations of consciousness none is to be expected.* But it is a fact the significance of which is sometimes exaggerated. The sense of our individual existence is sometimes treated almost as the materialist treats the idea of an atom. It is supposed to present us with an ultimate monad, marked by a definiteness so clear and intense, as to suggest the notion of a sort of spiritual impenetrability. This monad is believed indeed to have had an origin, to have been created or begotten. But now that it exists, it is regarded as an absolute unit, sharply cut out from the mystery of being, and incapable of generalization into any manifestation of a universal substance. Yet, as I have endeavoured to explain,† this sense of individuality belongs entirely to the phenomenal world, and is quite incapable of sustaining any such inferences. Equally with all phenomena it excites an unconquerable predisposition to recognize the manifestation of eternal being. But concerning itself it tells us nothing, except its relations, of co-existence or succession, to other phenomena; and this it does only in answer to patient observation and enquiry. Farther, as previously urged, this phenomenal individuality is realized with any clearness

* It is not altogether inconceivable, though the time seems remote, that a pursuit of the materialistic method (cf. "Mystery of Matter") may throw some light on the subject.

† "Philosophy of Ignorance," p. 90.

only as it were at the upper surface of life, where self meets the outer world. But the dark background, on which the images of reflection are thrown, melts away, without any definite bound at all, into the mystery of being, out of which our consciousness emerges. Both sets of experiences have their part in the education of our race,—those which contrast self with the outer world, and those which show the inner world as the vestibule of eternal being. But these last are specially concerned with the history of religion, and attain a culminating power in Christianity.

Pantheism, regarding all things as the phenomenal manifestation of God, is clearly consistent with the thought that in man such manifestations produce the phenomena of self-consciousness. And though this self-consciousness does not necessarily know itself to be divine, such a perception may easily be conceived as a stage of experience attainable in the course of phenomenal evolution. "We all," says the apostle, "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord."* The words are wonderfully applicable to the whole history of man. For in the world, as in a splendid mirror, we see a procession of images suggesting an eternal beauty and power from which they flow. But when we consider our own life, we find that we ourselves are dreams, changing from moment to moment of admiration or terror, joy or fear, in the

* 2 Corinthians iii. 18.

waves of the same Light that makes the mirrored scene. That which shines without shines inwardly too. The knowledge, feeling, desire, and self-control, into which we grow, come to us inwardly by the power of the same endless life that shows itself in the vision of creation. And so long as we bear in mind, that any notion of divine "plan" or "purpose" is necessitated only by the impossibility of our seeing the universe as an eternal whole; so long as we remember, that only to finite contemplation does phenomenal succession exist; we may very well see in the history of man an inspiration always raising him towards the consciousness of God as all in all. But it may be said that, on such a theory, the word inspiration can have no distinctive meaning; for, since all things are of God, it cannot be maintained that any thoughts are specially Divine. This objection demands a slight digression.

Pantheism does not mean that God is this or that, but that he is All in all. And conversely we cannot, and ought not to say, of a mountain or a tree, or even of a good man, or of the starry heaven, that this is God. For all of these are only fragmentary phenomenal manifestations of God. "The foot cannot say of the hand 'I have no need of thee;'" but neither foot nor hand can say "I am the man." A wave of the hand, a glance of the eye, may show the individual life; but of neither, except in an obviously metaphorical sense, can we say, "that is the man." So all creatures of the phenomenal world manifest God; but we have no

right to say of any of them, this is God. The same truth stated differently would perhaps be received more readily. For let it only be granted, that generalization, carried far enough, brings us to one universal substance, as the true entity supporting all phenomenal existences. No one would then think of saying of a table or a chair "this is the universal substance." For what we see is a special form and material, which distinguish these things from others. The unity underlying these divergencies is not seen at first, but becomes manifest on reflection. We then find that the true mode of regarding special objects is, to consider them as different manifestations of the universal substance. But they are generalized according to what we do *not* see, that is, their real being. And we have no right whatever to give the generalized name to what we do see; which is not true substance at all, considered in its universality, but only a certain relation between that substance and our faculties, under certain conditions. This relative result we may call by the name wood or iron, table or chair, as the case may be; but it is not true substance; for that is in itself unperceived and imperceptible. If, instead of the word substance, we use the phrase absolute being, every one would feel at once the absurdity of identifying this with a tree, or a mountain, or a star. So, if we believe that God is All in all, it does not in the least follow that we are to call any phenomenal creature by the name of God, or to identify Him with any of them, or

with the sum of our observations. Mr. Tennyson shows something more than even poetic insight when he asks

> "Is not the vision He—*though he be not that which he seems?*"

and again, when he says

> "*If we could see and hear*, this vision,—were it not He?"

and again, in contemplation of a flower, in a passage already more than once referred to;

> "If I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.'

For God is the All that is in all; or as it is sometimes expressed, the One in the many. He is the fulness in each thing, making it "a part and proportion of one wondrous whole." And so, no doubt, as our great poet has expressed it, if we could know the "all" of the flower, we should know the All of the universe. But God is not that which seems or is seen,—division, distinction, separateness. These are relations, forms of thought which serve to manifest God. But they are not God; for in the totality of things they vanish.

This gives us a very real sense in which, while "all things are of God," we may still recognize some things as Diviner than others. For there are some things which are to the human beholder eloquently suggestive of that divine All in which the universe is one. A

London fog is undeniably a creature of God. But as it chills, and darkens, and shuts us up, it neutralizes the power of contemplation. On the other hand a tender evening, when tinted clouds peep over the smoke-grimed houses, expands the heart to conceive the oneness of the world. The softness of the cloudlets, high up in the luxury of their silence above the roaring streets, seems to melt town and country into one, in the blessing of the setting sun. In such a contrast between fog and sunshine, we may, with clear significance, call the latter more divine than the former. Whatever has most force to carry our thoughts beyond what seems separate and limited, towards that eternal Goodness which is the sum of all perfection, the All in all,—this will rightly seem to us specially divine. And the suggestions springing from the contemplation of such objects bring with them a sacred impulse of inspiration. As already insisted, no separate object should be identified with God; and on the other hand God is equally the only substance of all. But in the relations of our phenomenal consciousness to a phenomenal world, some objects are found to be more suggestive of God than others; and those we call more divine.

It is involved in what has just been said, that the same distinction may be drawn between thoughts that arise in us, we know not how, amid the forces that play upon us from an infinite realm. We are not God; and our thoughts cannot be the thoughts of God; for

our minds are full of seeming separateness and finiteness. On the other hand God is in all our thoughts; for he is the eternal Power that makes thought possible. Still he cannot be identified with anything finite, and therefore only seeming. But there are some thoughts that flash like a light in a dark place, widening the spaces about us. There are some thoughts which strike us with a sense of our own nothingness, and of the grandeur of the eternal Being in whom we live and move. There are some thoughts which fire us with holy resolve; resolve, that fastens us to our place in the world, in loyalty to the universal Power whom we would manifest in our measure. All such thoughts as these are rightly distinguished as inspirations; and their records have made a bright track through the history of the world. For such thoughts, then, we may claim a special divinity. And as they have awakened in humanity a sense of relation to the Infinite; as they have kindled the desire for some practical expression of this sense; as they have drawn men from the darkness of brute-life into the "marvellous light" of communion with God; their records constitute the history of religion. The general course of evolution, apparently followed, has been indicated in the last essay. The glimmering wonder of original fetishism; the wider feeling, expressed in nature-worship, of an omnipresent secret of Power; the higher consciousness, breaking forth in historical prophetic religions, of the connection between this

reverence for the Supreme Majesty, and all loyalty of soul, need not again be insisted on. It is only needful, perhaps, to reiterate again and again, that when once the fiction of any infallible standard of truth is abandoned, there can be no difficulty in owning the reality of divine inspiration in every step of progress from mere animalism to the consciousness of God as Absolute Being. For when we have given up the illusion that any form of religion known to us is absolutely true, we are prepared to find that nothing, which can with any propriety be called a form of religion at all, is absolutely false.

My point now is, that in Christianity man's consciousness of relation to the Infinite substantially abandoned the materialistic husks which had first protected and then well-nigh stifled it; and that this consciousness emerged as pure spiritual life, mainly expressing itself in loyalty of soul to God; a feeling which is at once the most comprehensive motive of morality, and the source of all sacred daring or peace. We have seen * how this loyalty is the essence of that faith, which, in the New Testament, is represented as the germ of all righteousness. And it should be remarked that the real ultimate object of this faith is always the Divine Being. It is true that "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" is always insisted on as indispensable. But this is because He is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image

* "Essential Nature of Religion," p. 302-310.

of His person." That is, Christ is the mediate object through whom our faith lays hold on God. St. Peter appears to sum up the primitive doctrine on this point, when he says that Christ "was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." * The teaching of Christ himself also, on this subject, seems to be gathered up in the final words of his prayer in the fourth Gospel; "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." In accordance with this, St. Paul treats the faith of Abraham as absolutely identical with that of Christians. For with steadfast loyalty of soul Abraham was "strong in faith, giving glory to God." This was "imputed to him for righteousness;" and it is similarly imputed to Christians because they "believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." † It is true, indeed, that here a certain opinion as to the nature of Christ's resurrection is, so far as we can judge by the language before us, treated as inseparable from saving faith. Still, it is clearly not the opinion, but the loyalty to God associated with it, which is identified with the faith of Abraham.‡ Wher-

* 1 Peter i. 20, 21. † Romans iv. 24.

‡ In both the terms of St. Paul's comparison there are two elements, primary and secondary. In Abraham's case there is (1) loyalty to God, taking form in (2) a steadfast expectation of

ever, then, the Lord Jesus is set forth as himself the object of faith, the analogy of the New Testament requires us to understand such expressions to point to him, in virtue of his special divinity, as the mediate object, through whom "our faith and hope may be in God." Christianity, therefore, is not so inconsistent as to set before us two distinct objects of supreme loyalty; it gives us One only; the Eternal Power and Goodness, "in whom we live and move and have our being."

the fulfilment of a promise. In the Christian's case there is (1) loyalty to God, taking form in (2) steadfast belief that a certain event has happened. Now, the secondary elements are so completely different, that there can hardly be any comparison between them. Expectation about the contingencies of the future, and opinion about the unalterable certainties of the past, have surely little in common. Of course, there are those who say that the common element is a reliance on the veracity of the Most High. Thus God promised to give Abraham a son; and Abraham believed that He *would* do it. So the Divine Being has told Christians that He raised Christ up from the dead; and Christians believe that He *has* done it. But what divine voice is it which in this case represents the recorded oracle to Abraham? Who among us has heard an utterance from heaven declaring the *fact*, as Abraham is said to have heard the *promise?* Will it be alleged that we are called upon to identify the truth of human witnesses with the veracity of God? In St. Paul's most impassioned testimony to the resurrection, this is not his view. "If Christ be not risen . . . . . *we* are found false witnesses of God," (1 Cor. xv., 14, 15.) Surely common sense, which is a very firm ally of faith, teaches us that, when instituting the comparison in Romans iv., St. Paul was so filled with the identity of the primary element in each case, that he cared nothing about the dissimilarity in the secondary elements involved.

It will be understood, from what has been already said concerning the grander aspects of creation, or higher impulses of thought instinctively associated with God, that a spiritual pantheism need not find anything incongruous in the idea of Christ's special divinity; or in the conception of a supreme manifestation of God in him. For, as we say of scenes in nature peculiarly suggestive of the all-embracing Life, that they are divinely fair; and as we say of thoughts instinct with moral grandeur, that they are divinely great or good; so we must say of Him whose spiritual majesty is enthroned for ever in the gateways of eternity, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Nor need there be here,—nor is there intentionally at least,—any forced use of language in a non-natural sense, such as is always the sickly token of a decaying faith. Undoubtedly the doctrine, here maintained, does insist that all phases of real being are phases of God. But once more we must remind ourselves that God is not this or that phase of being; He is All in all. And therefore those things are in a very clear sense especially divine, which have most the power of expanding our thoughts toward the infinite Unity of the world; those things are especially divine, which give us to feel our personality as a bubble on the bosom of a living ocean. But diviner still are thoughts and words exciting in us a loyal recognition of almighty law, binding us to our place in eternal order. And surely, divinest of all is He who, interpret-

ing law by love, teaches us to find blessedness and peace, not in noisy self-assertion, but in a self-abandoning loyalty, that culminates in union and communion with God. The outward power and harmony often suggested in contemplations of the visible world, He brought bodily within the man. Not "lo here," nor "lo there," was his doctrine; but "The kingdom of God is within you." What else is that "power to become the sons of God," so grandly claimed as the gift of Christ, but the divinely-communicated self-control—the faithfulness, which keeps a man inwardly and outwardly at peace with divine law, conscious of God not only as the ruler of the universe, but as the essential being of his own life? What was the peace that Christ could speak and breathe within himself, when stepping over the threshold on the bitter path to the cross? Surely it was that sense of oneness with God, which made loneliness impossible, even under the kiss of Judas and the curse of Peter. What was that victory with which he overcame the world? Was it not his witness to the truth,—a witness borne not in word only, but in deed and in life,—that God is both centre and circumference to the noblest humanity? It would be as presumptuous, as with the fragmentary materials at command it would be certainly futile, to educe from the recorded recollections of Christ's words any ontological scheme of the world. And, when it is borne in mind that those words were mainly for the weary and heavy-laden, for the neglected drudges of the

commonwealth, for rude, unquiet hearts that spurned rabbinical prosing, it will appear unreasonable to seek in alternations of vivid picture and soothing melody for any elaborated intellectual system. To the inveterate mistake of interpreting his metaphorical use of familiar objects as intended to propound theological dogma, is due both the stolid superstition of the Romish Mass, and the Calvinistic distortion of the great sacrifice into the thinly-veiled blasphemy of a divine vindictiveness. But if "it is the Spirit that quickeneth;" if "the flesh profiteth nothing;" if "the words that He spoke are spirit and life;" then surely we must be right in recognizing, as the germ of his divine mission, a consciousness of God as subject, as the true essence of his being, such as made him feel at one with God in love for the world, at one with God in self-sacrificing patience under its sins, at one with God in triumph over death.

Let there be no misunderstanding. I am not asserting the impossible portent of an omniscient man, which indeed is expressly disclaimed in the gospel.* I am not insisting on an intellectual life unnaturally incongruous with preceding and surrounding influences.† It was his moral elevation, it was his spiritual power,

* Mark xiii. 32.

† Perhaps if it could be shown to be probable that Christ had any associations with the Jewish mysticism which makes man's essential being divine, a starting-point would be given for a more really rational life of Christ than has ever yet been written.

it was the shadowless purity of his devotion, his universal sympathy, his grasp of the burden of sin, his limitless self-sacrifice, which made Christ the Saviour of the world. And these attributes are most consonant with such a consciousness of God as would make the Divine Being the source of all strength, the inspirer of all goodness, the sum of all perfection. There is nothing in this at all inconsistent with the reception, and transmutation into a spiritual form, of Messianic traditions and hopes; nothing incongruous with the position of "an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile," and who felt his nation specially commissioned, as indeed facts prove that it was, to maintain the spirituality of the Divine Nature. Neither is there anything in such admissions as these in the slightest degree inconsistent with Christ's headship of a new humanity, to which God should be All in all. For it is, after all, not in any laborious intellectual efforts, but in a self-abandoning sense of nothingness amid the sacred vastness of the Divine rule, that we learn the most vivid realization of our relationship to the Infinite. And inasmuch as the vivid sense of God's universal kingdom, or of "an Eternal Power, not ourselves, who makes for righteousness" does more to bless and ennoble mankind than any intellectual achievement, we may well revere as the creator of a new age, him through whose person men learned to look to God as Father, Saviour and Judge. Nay more; as a feeling of communion with God, that is, a con-

sciousness of life in Him, and of the derivation of all power from Him, opens to us the present realization of an eternal life, the sum of all that is and ever was or can be, we may well say with St. John, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

It is confessedly difficult for any who feel their hearts warm towards the spiritual glory of Christ, to put into words the impression He makes upon them. For most of the notes of human greatness seem weak, inapplicable, even incongruous when attributed to him. For instance, individuality, which is so striking a characteristic of all rightful kings of men, seems very inapt in a description of the Person of Christ. That his character and his powers do, on any interpretation, stand alone in world-wide history, every one must feel. But the loneliness is not that of individuality. For this word is suggestive of some intense self-centred fire. And it is rather the absence of this that makes the greatness of Christ so sacred. On the other hand, were we to speak of his comprehensiveness, this also would have a truth, but it would jar upon our sense of his isolation. Who thinks of speaking about the intellect or the imagination of Christ? The last perfection of consummate art, unconscious simplicity, is there; and force of imagination is perhaps never shown more strikingly, than in the pourtrayal of things

invisible, by pictures which avoid both the bathos of particularity and the vagueness of abstraction. Yet when we dwell on such things, we feel that our eyes have lost, in curious speculations, the grandeur of the object. I do not think that this is to be accounted for altogether, if at all, by the halo with which reverence has surrounded the Lord. Indeed it may rather be maintained, that the intangible and indefinable sublimity of the Person has itself generated and maintained that halo. I am persuaded that any candid student of such records as are left us, would own, even though without the slightest sympathy for theological subtleties, that to speak about the intellect, or the imagination, or the organizing skill of Christ, would be mere awkward pedantry. And though the world was a little while back startled and enchanted with a strikingly original view of the historical Man, a view in which the design to found a kingdom, together with the legislative foresight displayed, occupied a prominent position in a reverent and sympathetic description; one can hardly help feeling that there was something left out; and we miss precisely the attributes, whatever they may be, which make the supremacy of Christ in history so natural.

In an essay like the present, designed only to show that the spirit of Christianity is not necessarily incongruous with the outlook of modern knowledge, many subjects on which one is compelled to touch are felt to be far too great for satisfactory treatment. But

the remarks here made have, of course, no pretension to finality or exhaustiveness. They deal only with the impression received by devout minds, in contemplation of the sacred Person, who has so wonderfully swayed the history of two thousand years. And putting on one side theosophic speculations, which constant association has illegitimately identified with affections only formalized and stiffened by the alliance, I contend that the one characteristic, which more than any other impresses the mind and kindles the heart in the contemplation of Christ, is his supreme consciousness of God. Not his language only, but the tone of feeling underlying it; not his recorded deeds only, but the conception of life that animates them, implies a sense of God as the very substance of his own being, and as far more real than the tangible world. If, in the simplicity of early years, he called the Infinite by a familiar name, the name "Father," that clung to his heart under Pharisaic scorn, and in the agony of the cross; this child-like daring had nothing in common with the arrogance of fanatic hardihood. To him the pure spiritual deity was so transcendently great, as to silence for ever intellectual ambition; yet so pathetically near, as to justify and hallow to a glorious use the tender eloquence of affection. Not to strong-winged imagination, but to purity of heart, was the vision of God to be given.* Not by correct reasoning, but by right action, was the feeling of a divine found-

* Matthew v. 8.

ation to be attained.* Not by cowardly desertion of the world, but by loyalty of soul in conflict against evil, was the consciousness of God to be realized.† Not by the wise and prudent, but by the poor and sorrowful, would be best understood the rest of all things in infinite Love.‡

Therefore, the name 'Father' uttered forth more of God in the heart of Christ, than all the traditions of ancient lore. And so far as the practical power of religion is concerned, this word of his is everlasting. For, necessarily imperfect though the name be, reverence expands it beyond all narrowing limits of an earthly association, while experience of divine grace keeps the fulness of the practical power. And familiar as the name is, by which Christ calls the divine presence that shines through him and casts a halo around him, surely there is nothing in the spirit of his teaching incongruous with the inscrutable awe, that must for ever shroud the Infinite. The imperfect memory of primitive disciples, and the precarious means by which that memory seems to have been preserved, may very well have admitted into the Gospel narratives, phrases or strains of thought, ill according with the general tendency of that great ministry. But making allowance for this, the idea of God which shines from the mirror of Christ's thoughts is such, that while its suggestions of Divine sympathy woo the trust of human need, its essential majesty shines

* Matthew vii. 21. † x. 18-20. ‡ xi. 25-30.

far beyond the reach of petty intellectual ambition. "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." But when that secret is revealed, it proves to be no initiation into gnostic mysteries. It is only the sense of Eternal Goodness, in the filial heart which says, "even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." It may seem to many only a wilful paradox; but it is only sober truth, that Christ taught little if any theological dogma. He accepted that consciousness of relation to the Infinite, which he found existing in the minds of men. He interpreted it by the unrivalled depth of his own spiritual insight. He controverted and denied what he knew to be not only erroneous, but base and demoralizing. For the rest, his positive teaching seems to have been addressed, not so much to the intellect, as to the emotions and the will, apparently in the confidence that loyalty of soul was the best antiseptic against grovelling superstition.* And his

* Take for instance the Sermon on the Mount, which is surely typical of Christ's teaching. Here we find no attempt to describe the Divine Nature or attributes as intellectual conceptions. They are rather assumed, as a supreme glory kindling moral aspirations. God is the vision of the pure in heart, the Father of peace-makers, the inspirer of good works, the source of mercies that descend on the deserving and undeserving alike; He is the sum of all perfection, the object of all loyal desire, the hearer of prayer, the rewarder of the humble and patient. But, unless such words as "lead us not into temptation," or "every one that asketh receiveth," be too literally construed, there is absolutely nothing determining the relation of God to nature in such a

testimony for God was not a contribution to rabbinical tradition, but the power of a life in which God was

manner as necessarily to clash with modern knowledge. It may be urged that at least God is conceived as a personal Being. True ; but in such a way as to be reconcileable with the idea that He is also *inconceivably more.* The Power who "makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends the rain on the just and on the unjust" is surely something *more* than personal. It is just this invariable action, without accommodation to circumstances usually considered by personal will, which suggests many of the difficulties of modern religion. The same observation might be made concerning Christ's comment on the destruction of those on whom the tower of Siloam fell. The light of God, which broods about the discourses of Christ, is very bright and impressive ; but, if we may so say, he never rounds it off into the definite orb of dogma, considered by so many as essential to earnest devotion. It is needless to say that there is no doctrine of the Trinity in the Gospels ; as, indeed, it does not exist in the New Testament, except as involved in a modus cogitandi, or economy of thought. And it may fairly be questioned, how far Christ's assertions of his own divinity,—which, without laying any stress on the fourth gospel, we may believe to be real reminiscences of his language,—were intended to express more than his profound consciousness of God as subject, or as the root of his life. Even in the apocalyptic prophecies of his last days, and in the anomalous parable of Dives and Lazarus, there is a marked reticence about the ineffable being of God. For it is in the one case the Son of Man who sits as judge, in the other Abraham who speaks,—not the Almighty. It will be obvious, however, that a discussion of the extent to which popular conceptions were adopted either by the Great Teacher, or by his immediate disciples, would lead us too far. If only every dogma of infallibility be frankly surrendered, there can be no difficulty in conceiving that Christ's consciousness of God had a germinative spirituality, which could not fully manifest itself in his day or his age.

felt as the deeper Self. It seems, indeed, to be because self was so lost in God, that the impression made upon us by this divine manhood is like nothing else in history. A man utterly without personal aims appears an anomaly. But when the place of such personal aims is taken by a sublime sense of divine purpose in the world, he becomes a revelation. And such was the case with Christ. A distinguished man once ventured the assertion, that Marcus Antoninus was a nobler ideal of human character than is the object of Christian reverence. To which a professed Positivist present replied, "he had never heard that Marcus Antoninus ever conceived of saving a world by the sacrifice of himself." The remark was just. It is precisely the moral grandeur of the purpose, borne out by the spiritual power directed to its achievement, which puts the person and the work of Christ simply beyond all rivalry; and assures us—if it were necessary—of the substantial reality of a character impossible of invention. But this purpose, to save a world by the sacrifice of himself, is surely traceable to his profound consciousness of God as involving both self and the world. I do not presume by these last words to represent the Saviour of mankind as distinctly entertaining, or directly teaching, any pantheistic philosophy. His consciousness dwelt beyond the range of any mere philosophy; was too rich in the possession of God to need it. I only mean that he who felt the Father dwelling in him, and watched

the Father tinting the lilies, feeding the ravens, sending rain on the evil and the good, must have viewed all things in the light of God; and that in spending himself upon the moral elevation of the world, he was as it were consciously dissolving self in God's glory. How this purpose grew, many have endeavoured to relate; and as many have failed. Let us be content with catching an illustrative moment in the midst of the Gospel story, a moment rich in suggestions of the past, and obviously pregnant with the future.

Without descending to minute questions of criticism, we may be satisfied to assume, that at the time described by the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, Christ's active ministry had encompassed Galilee, if not Judæa. It was high time that the fruit of so much devotion should be apparent. The country side that so gladly heard his words, the towns blessed with his deeds of love, might have been expected to raise him up an army of supporters, by whose aid the life of the nation should be lifted to a higher level. The scribes were very zealous for the ancient Scriptures. Surely they might be expected to recognize the living Word of God. The Rabbis garnished the sepulchres of the prophets, silent for so many centuries. Surely they should rejoice at the revival of the prophetic spirit once more. As yet they had given no sign, except of alarm and repugnance. But Christ's disciples were scattered everywhere through the villages,

proclaiming the good news; and all would yet be well. John the Baptist, with the genuine insight of inspiration, had acknowledged the work to be of God; and the fact of his imprisonment might perhaps give more solemn weight to the memory of his words. Alas! at that moment there came two disciples from the chained prophet, with a question that must have fallen sadly on the heart of Christ, "Art thou He that should come? Or do we look for another?" That there was some disappointment at John's hesitation, or even some tender condemnation, seems implied in one or two words of the discourse that follows. But on the other hand, this discourse, by the eulogium it pronounces on the doubter, sets to us a notable example of the generosity which ought to characterize the Christian spirit. John might hesitate about Jesus; but he was no mere "reed shaken with the wind." He might have been distinguished by an eccentric garb. But he had far other titles to reverence. "A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet,"—the greatest among all born of women yet; and still there was a kingdom at hand, so glorious that its humblest subject should be a mightier man. But did not John know this kingdom was so near? And how then could others, inferior far, be expected to understand? Such reflections may be imagined to have engendered the mingled anger and sorrow betrayed by following words. The thoughts of John's captivity, and perhaps of his own inevitable end, would seem to have led the

Lord to dwell, with sadness, and some irony, on the insensibility of a generation to which he and his forerunner alike ministered. Surely in the depth of that consciousness where God was enthroned, Christ yearned to see of the travail of his soul. And the results achieved must have seemed little proportioned to the greatness of his passion. In vain at his touch diseases fled; in vain by the music of his voice demoniac madness was calmed, or the hearts of the poor gladdened with hope. For the joy was but a fleeting excitement, and the sin remained. Still, in the synagogue and streets of Capernaum, silly gossip made his mighty grace only the last novelty of curious talk. Still, on the shore, by Chorazin and Bethsaida, fishermen and buyers wrangled and cheated, in oblivion of the kingdom of Heaven. Still the rabbis shrugged their shoulders, or knitted their brows, or turned pious eyes to heaven, in deprecation of unprecedented doctrines. And still the cloud of certain ruin, hopeless demoralization, national overthrow, loomed blacker and higher over the beloved land. Was it not a childish mockery of judgment, for a generation in the grasp of death to taunt one prophet for his gloom, and the next for his sunny joy? Woe was at hand; and woe must be threatened, even though fresh hostility might be provoked. But despair, which always comes from want of faith, could not touch a soul for whom self was lost in God. All must be well; for all was in the counsels of God. After all, they were mainly the rich

and proud, who remained unblessed. For the poor and afflicted, nay the publicans and harlots, and rude and boisterous people, pressed into the kingdom of God. They indeed could do him no honour according to the fashion of this world. Not such were the followers whom philosophers, rabbis or scribes had sought. Not from such is the influence or authority to be gained, which can by force compel the regeneration of society. But he, whose deepest consciousness is a realization of the power and the patience of eternal Love, can turn, not with courage only, but with thankful joy, to face that lowlier way of sacrifice, which is the divine law of moral progress. The adherence of the worldly-wise, of the mighty, or the noble, would after all have hampered with compromises, and defaced by cunning policy, the purity of the ideal life he proclaimed. Better as it is. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," he cries, "that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." There is here a recognition of a mystery in his mission, not to be unravelled yet; and he plainly feels within himself the presage of some universal dominion. But let that come as the eternal counsels may decree. His work lies now with those who feel their need; and ignoble though they seem, they are in his eyes hallowed by the redeeming love of God. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you,

and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." But should any one wonder at a meekness which asserts itself; let him remember that it could only win by sympathy. And one essential condition of sympathy was a recognition of the difference between Christ's bearing toward sinners, and the arrogant separation of the Pharisees. It was as though, in his isolation, he deprecated any error which could cut him off from souls in special need of blessing. "Will ye also go away?" he seems to ask. The great and the powerful may take their own way. "They have their reward." But let not the needy, or the suffering, or the oppressed be abashed by the lofty ideal he upholds of the better life. He is more at one with them than they can understand. And in the very purity, from which they shrink, they may find rest to their souls. In these words the Spirit of the Saviour seems to look out upon us like some pictured face, that follows us with pleading eyes wherever we turn. The quietness they breathe steals over the heart, like a blessed lull in the fevered struggle for precedence; and for a moment we seem to know the repose of heaven.

If we measure not by lapse of time, but by development of purpose, this incident appears to stand halfway between the one reminiscence preserved to us of Christ's childhood, and the consummation on Calvary. And without pretending now to detect any growth of purpose,—a precarious attempt with materials so frag-

mentary,—we cannot be wrong in thinking, that the early forgetfulness of everything in the mysterious interest of the Heavenly Father's house, betokens the same spirit which is here represented as resting, in self-abandonment and cheerful acquiescence, on the counsels of God. From this point to Calvary, the course is divinely inevitable. For a life possessed by a consciousness of God, so aggressive in its energy, and so utterly incongruous with the stolid worldliness of the recognized religious leaders, could have but one end. And that end was the consummation of a life of sacrifice, in which everything was postponed to the maintenance and the propagation of the Saviour's own consciousness of God. Thus with him the first motive was not "the enthusiasm of humanity," but the love of God. Yet there is nothing to justify us in supposing that theology, properly so called, ever formed the subject of his teaching. God was to him an indwelling life, an inspiring spirit, an atmosphere of love, the Eternal Power, which is the author and sustainer of all law. The one word "Father," which he habitually used in preference to all names of majesty, seems chosen for the love, and care, and guidance, and communion of heart, which it betokened, rather than for any theory it might suggest as to the divine generation of mankind. Still, when its associations of familiar intercourse are connected with that impression of an all-pervading Presence, which is made upon us by Christ's language concerning God, we are inevitably reminded of St.

Paul's words concerning Him, whose "offspring" we are; while, at the same time, "in Him we live and move and have our being."

The spirit of primitive Christianity is surely best learned by the study of Christ. But those who cling in pathetic terror to the rotten dogma of infallibility, must needs attempt to construct, out of the conflicting records of the Church's early struggles, a complete system of doctrine. When one remembers the glimpses of entirely different systems of thought, which we catch in the gospels, in the epistles of St. Paul, and in those of St. John, it is as though, in view of such attempts, we were watching an unskilled antiquary endeavouring to combine into one consistent whole the disjecta membra of several ancient statues, all belonging to different types of beauty, but now irrecoverable in their several completeness. To make one figure out of them may be a triumph of ingenuity. But let not antique art be blamed if the foot of Mercury is joined to the leg of Hercules, or the arm of Venus to the hand of Mars. In the primitive age of the Church fond memory and Messianic hopes, apocalyptic visions and theosophic speculations, spiritual longing, and curiosities of interpretation, conservative attachment to the law, and the courage of spiritual freedom, all found their special devotees; and generated more or less distinct modes of thought about Christ; of which no complete exposition any longer exists. But the arbitrary conjunction of the Alexandrian Logos doc-

trine * with the childlike freshness of the older gospels, —or the notion that the Sermon on the Mount is incomplete, unless supplemented by the Epistle to the Romans,—not only fails to restore the supposed intellectual harmony of primitive Christian doctrine, but in the very endeavour to reconstruct one primitive type of articulate creed, betrays a total misinterpretation of the materials at hand. These materials are not merely insufficient for the purpose; but they suggest that the purpose itself involves an utterly erroneous assumption concerning Christian origins. For they lead us rather to the belief that the primitive unity was not one of opinion, but of spirit and life. It was "the mind of Christ," "the spirit of Christ," which constituted the true germ of the Church. And this essential spirit showed itself, from the first, in a variety of forms, occasioned by local or individual peculiarities, and incapable of amalgamation into one consistent system of thought. If we would understand primitive Christianity, we must insist upon the very fullest significance of St. Paul's words "the Lord is the spirit." † That amazing life of Christ, which we have identified with the consciousness of God,

* I am far from denying the Johannine origin of the Fourth Gospel in this sense, that it is some Ephesian disciple's account of John's teaching. But even though it were written by John himself, the attempt to force it into harmony with the synoptical gospels can only result in incongruity.

† 2 Cor. iii.—Not "that Spirit" as in the authorized version, which is certainly an incorrect reading.

achieved through the sacrifice of the cross a power, such as it never could have wielded from the throne of the Cæsars. I cannot doubt that in some mode inexplicable to me, his more immediate followers had so vivid an impression of his appearance to them after his death, that they firmly believed his body to have risen from the grave. Nay, in the case of St. Paul, we have distinct historical proof of such an appearance; and this is related by the Apostle in such a manner, as plainly to imply similar appearances to the eleven, and indeed to many others. I care not in the least whether of the epithets, natural or supernatural, be applied to such experiences. If the fact is proved, this also is proved, that it must fall within the divine order of the world. Nor do I seek to urge my opinion upon others. I only take my own way in the development of thoughts, which, however weak, have at least a wider aim than the establishment of any opinion, —that, namely, of maintaining the possible, nay, inevitable survival of the Christian spirit, through an almost fundamental revolution in all our theological notions. Let me assume, for clearness' sake, that the apostles had by some divine illumination so vivid an impression of the occasional presence of their risen Lord, as to be thrilled to the very core of their hearts with the assurance of his eternal life. Then this experience made possible such a transfusion of his spirit into theirs, as was never known in the history of any great spiritual teacher and his school. If any one prefers to

think that the stupendous power of Christ's personal life itself ensured some such experience among his disciples, I shall not care to argue the point; though the explanation would hardly apply to the one most indisputable instance, that of St. Paul. But even if it were so, I should urge that, apart from the re-action of such an experience as leaves its traces in the records of the resurrection, it is inconceivable that the personal power of Christ should have been for them the omnipotent and deathless inspiration which it was.

Be that as it may, they had seen the risen Lord. And now they were assured that the life they had known, so grand and tender, so strange and so homely, so distant, yet so near, was the very life of God in the soul of man. It was not dead; it could not die; it was enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high; and though but now despised and rejected of men, it had become the measure and the administration of eternal judgment. "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made both Lord and Christ that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified." Then what preternatural horror seemed to gather round the memory of Calvary, and what a divine splendour to break athwart the gloom! What a death was that, for sacred holiness and longing love to die, amidst the howlings of a demoniac mob! O prodigious burden of mysterious woe, that bowed to death the superhuman might, unrecognized till enthroned in heaven! O dread secret of divine patience and

measureless human sacrifice! "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by the hands of the wicked, have crucified and slain." "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and ye killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead!" What wonder if, when smitten with words like these from lips that burned with sacred passion, and when awed by the light which shone in eyes that had seen the vision of the Lord, the sinners of Jerusalem trembled and quailed! What wonder, if "they were pricked in their heart," and cried in agony of spirit, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And when their hearts yielded to the command "repent," and their stricken souls went forth in loyalty to the divine messenger they had rejected, how blessed was the calm that stole over their troubled consciences! "Come unto me," He had said, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden." But at that time they would not come. Yet the crown of thorns, and the nails and spear, and the anguish and the shame had left unconquered, at the last, the consciousness of peace in God, which made that Presence diffuse divine repose. And now when they had slain him, they found his love was deathless. His promise, "I will give you rest," if faint with distance, came now wafted from the unseen world, like the breath of a larger and diviner life. To those who remembered his words on earth, many a strange utterance, that then

had seemed, as it dropped into unsympathetic hearts, hard, strange, and meaningless, now unfolded the perfect flower of a supernatural wisdom.

"*Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" "*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*" "*Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, they will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.'*" "*Did ye never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected: the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?'*"

What if the leaders of the people, the Pharisees and Scribes, whose haughty bearing was such a contrast to the brotherly sympathies of the crucified prophet, had misread the will of God, and in very deed had murdered the promised Christ? What if that had come upon them, which was spoken by the prophets, "I will work a work in your days, which ye will in nowise believe though it be told you?" But here were the followers of Jesus, manifestly endued with power from on high; speaking with a resistless inspiration; testifying that their Lord was enthroned in heaven, and would come again to reign on earth

And they declared that no thought of vengeance was in his heart; that the prayer for mercy to his murderers, uttered with his dying lips, had become now a divine message of pardon and redemption, to all who believed on his name. Beyond the miraculous power ever wielded by self-sacrifice, in proportion to its moral greatness and to the fitness of its form to strike the common heart, no preternatural wonder is needed to account for the spiritual results that followed. That the energy of the sacred passion, awakened on the day of Pentecost, was specially divine, is here most sincerely recognized. For this was a great moment in the history of the world, a moment in which many a stream of ancient inspiration and contemporary feeling joined their forces with the mighty life of Christ to beget a new era. And the power manifested in that moment was specially divine, because it so clearly tended to unity, Catholicity, the universal consciousness of God: it was specially divine, because it substituted the worship of the heart for that of the hands; specially divine, because it awoke in the soul of humanity a sense of inward divine rule answering to the grand order of the world without; and in a word, because virtually, though not yet apparently, it set the human feeling of relation to the Infinite free from all accidents of formal expression, and started it on a course of expansive growth, which, all protests to the contrary notwithstanding, has

proved itself, and will prove itself, potentially co-extensive with every possibility of knowledge.

It is, of course, admitted that the Apostles and the primitive Church very speedily had a more or less articulated system of religious opinion, which was soon hardened into creeds. Nay, it is undeniable that the very first outburst of the spiritual life, engendered by the love of Christ, was associated with undefined imaginations of his supernatural being, and with definite expectations of his return to reign. Still, the power of that new life did not lie in the imaginations, or the opinions, with which it was associated; but in the repentance, in the self-contempt, in the earnest aspiration, in the bright loyalty of soul,—all of which were engendered by the new aspect in which the ministry and the death of Christ were seen after his departure from the world. Whatever may be thought of the historical untrustworthiness of the earlier portion of the Book of Acts, in matters of detail, the letters of St. Paul and all that is known concerning the earliest Church unite to stamp as highly probable the account, there given us, of the general tenor of the first Apostolic preaching. And it would seem to have consisted mainly in an impassioned contrast between the glorious attributes of Christ, stamped with God's approval by his re-appearance after death, and the shameful wrongs inflicted upon him by the stolid perverseness of a

sinful race.* It was this that pricked the hearers of hearers, and touched them to the quick; so that they repented with tears, or gnashed in rage, according to their susceptibility or pride. It was this which, when mercy was assured, shed abroad in their hearts the love of God, whose infinite charity beamed from the face of Jesus Christ. It was this sense of a divine generosity, which opened the hearts of the primitive Christians towards each other and towards all mankind. For, said they, "Beloved, if God so loved us we ought also to love one another." It was this sense of a love passing all human love, exhaustless in patience, unwearied by rebellion, undimmed by insult, unconquered by death, that searched the hidden man with a marvellous light, clarified all motives, burned up all corruption, and fused all moral energies in that strenuous loyalty to God which can transform itself into all manly and womanly virtue. For, said they,—years no doubt before Paul said it,—"God, that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

I know, indeed, that this sense of a superhuman love derived a sort of discordant keenness from a foreboding of dire wrath, from which it was believed to deliver

* Cf. Acts ii. 22-24, 36; iii. 13-18; iv. 8-12; v. 29-32; vii. 51-53. Indeed the whole argument of Stephen, being a narrative of Jewish opposition to the messengers of God, is a preparation for this climax. See also, ix. 5; xiii. 26-31.

them. Later Jewish anticipations of Messiah's glory, amplifying the visions of Daniel, had painted on the clouds of a melancholy future, portents of the terrible might with which the Son of man should crush the rebellion of the world. Nor is it possible to doubt that the Lord himself had impressed the consciences of his hearers by pictures of a wrath to come; though to attribute to him all the details of those pictures, as handed down in the gospels, is as needless and unjustifiable, as it is perhaps at times painful to the secret hearts of all devout readers of the Bible. Certainly the Apostles expected that "this same Jesus," who had been seen by them in manifest vision after his death, would speedily come again in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and dead. But notwithstanding, it is plain that their enthusiastic zeal was not of that stern forbidding character which is hardened and tempered by terror. They were "gentle unto all men, apt to teach; in meekness instructing those that opposed themselves;" or if at times thunder broke from their lips, it was wakened by uncontrollable indignation for the outraged love of God. The strength of their divine life was something entirely apart from all fierce images of wrath; it was faith in Him who had "so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son."

It was impossible that emotions, such as those which we have conceived to be aroused on the day of Pentecost, should, especially amongst such a people, and in

such a time, be unaccompanied by portents and signs from heaven. When the heart is shaken, and the brain reels with glorious excitement, there is little wonder if houses should be felt to tremble, or even the earth to quake. When a holy fire runs from soul to soul, imagination soon pictures it as a halo crowning sacred heads. That in times of strong and blissful passion, weak physical frames may be strengthened by an inspired voice, or madness depart at the tone of confident command, seems to be among the possibilities of our mysterious constitution. Nor should we care, in such things, to draw any hard-and-fast line between what may, and what may not, have happened. What really did happen, is a matter for historical enquiry, not for religious instinct, to determine. And it is perfectly safe to say that no possible issue of such an enquiry can affect, in any hostile sense, the position which is maintained in these pages. For it is assumed that the motive power of religious progress is action *through* consciousness, by that Infinite Power, which elsewhere acts *beyond* consciousness. If, then, it should be proved that specially divine inspirations have been accompanied by deeds or events not to be accounted for by any known laws, it will only be established that laws beyond our ken are part of the order of the world, and only rarely come into view in association with religious excitement. Or if, on the other hand, it should be finally established that all apparently abnormal circumstances, called miraculous, have been

the effect of imagination, or the exaggerations of tradition; what is proved is, not the illusiveness of religion as springing from our consciousness of relation to the Infinite,—for this religion, both in the past and in the present, is an essential element among the forces that make us men—but what is proved is simply this, that the manifestation of the Infinite in the laws of the universe as we know them has, in fact, been sufficient to bring us to our present consciousness of God and hold on eternal life. For the purpose of this argument, then, I care not whether the Apostolic miracles and visions were the pure effect of imagination, or the fruit of tradition, or both combined. All I contend for is, that the excitement which, in the Apostolic age, undoubtedly was caused by the expectation, or the imagination, or the recital of wonders, was not the origin of evangelical zeal, nor was it ever suffered to disturb the simple aims of Christian love. Whatever may have been the origin of the miraculous story related concerning the healing of the lame man by Peter and John at the Beautiful gate of the Temple, it is clear that, in the memory of the Church, the excitement attendant on the wonder did not for one moment distract attention from "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "Ye denied the Holy one and the Just," the healers cry, "and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life,* whom God hath raised from the dead." There

*'Αρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς—one of the grandest names in the New Testament.

is no self-gratulation, no pride in occult powers, perceptible here or elsewhere; it is abundance of life through the crucified Jesus, wealth of divine mercy through a rejected Messiah, that gives to such wonders all their value.*

The early association of regenerative grace with the emotions produced by the contrast between Christ's glorious attributes and his ignominious death, was strengthened by the memory of his own words, which, as penitents would soon be reminded, contained many forebodings of the cross as the end of his earthly career, and the commencement of his heavenly power. And such an association could not long be the subject of thought, without suggesting more or less formal theories to account for it. As the earthly circumstances of Calvary's dread tragedy became more and more veiled by distance of time as well as by reverential awe, it was most natural that minds accustomed to Jewish ceremonies of worship should find, in Christ's supreme act of devotion to God's will, some transcendental analogy to the sacrifices of the Temple. But such a comparison was probably of a slower growth than is usually supposed. If, indeed, we may believe that John the Baptist gave to the Lord the pathetic title of "the Lamb of God," the analogy had been

* How sensible and manly is St. Paul's treatment of these strange experiences! Cf. 1 Cor. xii., xiii. The subject is well treated by the late Isaac Taylor, in his "Restoration of Belief," though his inferences can hardly be maintained.

already suggested before it was fulfilled. But if the book of Acts represents fairly the general tenour of earliest Apostolic preaching, it does not appear that such an analogy was ever urged on those who were first moved to repentance by the preaching of the Gospel. Even St. Paul, in his earliest experiences of divine grace, had not, so far as we learn, any thought whatever of the death of Christ as a propitiatory or vicarious sacrifice. The spiritual arrow that went to his heart was the question from heaven "Why persecutest thou me?" His trembling astonishment was caused, not by any thought of an awful price paid to redeem his guilty soul, although afterwards such an emblem naturally occurred to him; but by the conviction that in his self-confident arrogance he had been fighting against the love of God. Afterwards, when struggling for language adequate to express the emotions that he felt, and the larger meaning given to the religious aspirations of his race, he fell into the way of treating the death of Christ as a divinely appointed propitiation for sin. But he never worked out the analogy with the particularity found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. And nowhere in the New Testament is there any justification for the later Christian theory, that Christ suffered the punishment due to human guilt, or offered a "perfect sacrifice" as the Anglican Church has it, "to reconcile his Father to us." No doubt the word propitiation, if logically interpreted, would involve such an idea; but it never

was logically interpreted by Apostolic writers. They loved to see the visions of the prophets, and the ritual of the temple, fulfilled in Christ. But they never suffered this train of thought to disturb or distract the simple adoration, with which they celebrated and proclaimed the free and undeserved love of God to a sinful race. It is true that St. Paul uses expressions, which, on the theory of his infallibility, would go as far to justify one set of theologians, as other expressions would, on the same theory, to justify their opponents. It is true, that in his eager wonder at the divine paradox of a crucified Messiah, he declares that Christ became a curse for us; and that God "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." But the sympathetic heart, that is borne along the torrent of passion preceding these latter words, must feel that the Apostle had in his heart only one feeling of amazement, and joy, and triumph, in the love of God to sinful men. Sneering critics had said he was beside himself. Be it so, he replied, "whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober" it is an effort of self-control for the sake of others. For we are carried beyond ourselves; "the love of Christ constraineth us," because we thus judge, that if one died for all,—why, then all are dead; they have no right at all any more to live to themselves. If a man is in Christ, he is in a new world, in which all things are seen to be of God. Indeed, this is the sum and substance, heart and soul of our message; that "God was in Christ reconciling the

world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God!" How the man's living heart seems to throb beside us as we read these words! What a grand new life it must have been, to break out of musty rabbinism into such a realization of Almighty Love!

Now this was the secret of primitive Christianity. It was not a doctrine, but a life. It was not a theory of the world, but a new, fuller, sweeter sense of relation to the Infinite God. The doctrines that it taught, and the theories it propounded, were for the most part expedients of expression, modes of thought, devised for the convenience of modes of feeling. And this is confirmed by the reflection, that so very large a part of Christ's own teaching was aimed at the destruction of narrowing and perverting doctrines, rather than at the establishment of any new creed. Men were not to interpret the Creator by their factious hostilities; not to suppose that He would hear for their much speaking; not to think that they could circumvent His eternal laws with their petty casuistry. Thus the Lord broke down on every side the barriers which oppressed men's sense of infinite goodness and power. The name "Father" pointed the track by which the heart and conscience could soonest reach the Shechinah. And the sacrifice of Christ, by the vision which it gave of perfect union with the divine will, and by the thoughts

it stirred of supreme goodness bearing human sin with endless patience, gave to man's consciousness of relation to the Infinite a brightness, keenness and purity, such as it had never known before.

But did Christ *explain* God to men? Was it any part of his mission to make Absolute Being comprehensible to finite minds? Did he give any metaphysical formulas of religious belief, or say thus, and thus only, shall the Infinite be conceived? The answer is inevitable, that he had not a word to say about the Absolute or the Infinite as such. So far as we can judge, he never spoke of the Divine Being from an ontological point of view at all; unless indeed we regard in this light some utterances recorded in the fourth gospel; and these seem fairly suggestive of spiritual pantheism.* The Great Teacher appears rather to have recognized the consciousness of God in its practical aspect, as an ultimate fact in human nature. And if we may venture to interpret his design in modern modes of thought, we may say that his aim was so to clarify this eye of the soul, as to enable it to see, in the rule of God, the evolution of ideal goodness. But if it be asked, what was the standard of this goodness?—the answer must be, har-

* John xvii. 21, &c. The words "God is a Spirit" (iv. 24) may be interpreted as ontological; but keeping the mystery of matter in view, we shall not see anything in them inconsistent with pantheism.

mony with the nature and the will of God, which are of course the same thing seen through different modes of human thought. And if it be farther asked, how do we know what is in harmony with the nature and the will of God?—that question is answered, in modern times, by a reference to the manifestations of universal order, physical and moral. This order we learn by observation; and interpret by divinely implanted predispositions. Invariable sequence, under the same conditions, is an outward fact. The approving sense of order is a subjective element, roused to consciousness by that outward fact. And so all through the realm of law, even when poison kills and fire burns what we love or prize, we have an instinctive tendency, which grows in strength by extended observation, to recognize with consenting approval the reign of order, although under the special conditions the immediate effects are painful. But the one initial postulate of morals,—that we are bound to conform ourselves to the divine order of the world, and to sacrifice pleasure, profit, life itself if necessary for the working out of that order into higher forms of human society,—can be established by no induction, unless indeed it were drawn from a godlike contemplation of eternity. This postulate is a universally inspired predisposition, inherent in the very nature of man. Its binding force may never be realized, apart from the exciting influence of outward circumstances. But when it is realized, there is always felt to be more in it than could ever have been

given by outward circumstance; a strength that springs from an awful sense of allegiance due to infinite Power. And the objects of contemplation, which most vividly excite this inward predisposition, are not scenes of nature's beauty or terror, but the noble deeds of our own kind who forget themselves in a mission of benevolence or truth. It is from this point of view that the world owes most to Jesus Christ. And this is a debt the sense of which is never lessened, nor the gratitude it inspires ever dimmed, by any transference of the standard of goodness from ancient authority to the observed order of the world.

In the days of Christ, the mode in which standards of goodness are formed by experience was not understood; and the Universe was a vision of which not many felt the real grandeur. He, indeed, with divinely illumined insight, saw everywhere in the fairness of creation analogies to spiritual beauty; and his parables should have for us now greater fulness of meaning than ever. The lilies of the field and the fowls of the air spoke to him of a living order, that betokened the fatherly providence of God. But the hour was not yet come for the widest application of teaching such as that. He could not point his hearers to the scroll that is now unrolled before the wondering eyes of men by modern discovery, and which is inscribed within and without in words of unbending but beneficent law. It was not his mission to draw from a wealthy chaos of long accumulated facts, the principles

underlying national order and social content. Yet it is very noteworthy, that he refused to appeal to the arbitrary standard of ancient tradition. For he spoke out of the fulness of his own life, "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." He assumed certain results of experience, without distinction as to their source. And he appealed to the interpretation which must be put upon them by predispositions nearly allied to the consciousness of God. "Why, even of yourselves," he asked, "judge ye not that which is right?" In this way he sought to excite in his hearers aspirations after a higher righteousness than pharisaic observance of traditional rules. They knew, by lessons received in childhood, that it was wrong to commit murder; but he was sure that the interpretation of conscience would find involved here a higher law against unreasonable anger.* They were familiar with distinctions drawn between a bare promise and a solemn oath; and they knew the inconvenience of uncertain dependence upon their neighbour's word. But he was assured, that the interpretation of conscience would find in such experiences the suggestion of a purer ideal of speech, according to which oaths should be needless, because every word was sacred.† So, using the materials at his command, and strong in his own supreme consciousness of God, he endeavoured to clear the inward eye, that it might see in the divine rule the working

* Matthew v. 21. † v. 33.

out of an ideal goodness. Yet, after all, his dearest blessing to the world was the amazing impulse he gave to the human sense of glory in unreserved loyalty to God. He had a work to do, and it was his meat and drink to do it. He had a mission to fulfil in wakening man to a diviner life of reconciliation with God, and no feeling of personal aims for a moment conflicted with its discharge. A self-less man, a shadowless portent, he trod the highway of uncompromising righteousness, and found the cross, at the end, the throne of a universal dominion.

In all this, I repeat, there is nothing to identify the Saviour's regenerative power with any propositions of metaphysical theology, nor with any ontological theories of the universe that can possibly clash with the certainties of physical knowledge. If, indeed, we were bound to accept *as infallible* the apostolic interpretations of his nature and work, the case would be hopeless; though, as we have seen, the spirit of their teaching is suggestive of an expansive divine life, capable of endless growth. But with the dogma of infallibility I do not concern myself at all. It may be still popular. But as a barrier in the progress of thought it is so riddled through, that it survives—like Temple Bar—only as a foolish anachronism. And when once the infallibility of the Scriptures is frankly abandoned, there is nothing to prevent such an interpretation of Christian origins as shall preserve the true substantial meaning of inspiration, grace,

consciousness of God, and divine communion, while at the same time it is inviolable under any possible revolutions in philosophy, science, or historical criticism. Such an interpretation we obtain, when we regard the Christian revelation as the concentration of all the forces of spiritual growth which tended to bring out man's conscious relation to the Infinite in the form of a practical loyalty, exhibited in worship and in deeds, to the Supreme Power manifest in the order of the world. When that result was once established, the way was opened for farther religious development, in accordance with our increased knowledge of nature, both in man and in the world. For whatever new truth is discovered, the vital spirit of Christianity would teach us to conform ourselves loyally to it, as a freshly seen manifestation of God. Such an expansion in the intellectual forms of religion is inevitable, and, in fact, has been to a considerable extent realized; but it has been continually hampered by the false assumption, that modes of representing the Infinite, adopted in the first century as expedients of thought, were final and infallible declarations of absolute truth. When, however, these expedients of thought are candidly examined, it is found that they make no pretence of conveying absolute truth. Truth they do express, which answers to the needs of the heart. But the mystery of Infinite Power far transcends the range of such expressions, and remains the inscrutable object of

speechless reverence. That God is to us what a father is to a child, experience of life and of divine grace shows, to the feelings of most, with resistless conviction. But that this is not a full expression of the Infinite, that God is immeasurably more, the same experience, when enriched by observation of the world, incontestably proves. And not only so; but in that immensity which outranges the expression, we cannot deny that there is much that is incongruous with the associations of human fatherhood. What then? Shall we give up the name? No; for within limits it is indisputably true to our experience; and the loyalty which it engenders, fearless of ultimate contradiction, trusts that what is more than fatherhood is inconceivably better too.

So with the indefinite notion of a divine Trinity, that hovers uncertainly on the pages of the New Testament. It is scarcely so distinct as fully to justify any of the creeds. But as an expedient of thought it is so valuable still, that its abandonment is very much to be deprecated. For, speaking broadly, when we devoutly dwell on our conscious relation to the Infinite, generic experience, the result of long inheritance based on actual facts, presents the Divine Being to our thoughts in a threefold aspect. We think of Him as the Father, the source and substance of all things, in whom we live and move; we think of Him, more definitely, as actuating and living through immortal humanity,

and representatively in the God-consciousness of the Man Christ Jesus; we think of Him as the mysterious energy stirring in our hearts, convincing our unworthiness, quickening aspiration, expanding sympathy, and giving us to feel our ground in God's eternal life. But these three are One, unthinkable in division, and, though not to be realised in their unity, ever, to our consciousness, passing into one another. When such an economy of thought is interpreted as implying three eternal Persons, it becomes insupportable. But apart from such a perversion it does enable us, in our consciousness of relation to the Infinite, to contemplate actual facts, as it were, on their divine side. And thus regarded, there can be no more rational, and no more comprehensive utterance of devotion, than the ancient doxology of the Christian Church. The ascription of glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, is an outgoing of the heart in love and reverence towards all aspects of being, which bring us face to face with its One Eternal Life. And the words declaring the beginning, midst, and end to be one, seem, as already remarked, like an unconscious anticipation of the Spiritual Pantheism which is the inevitable goal of Christianity.

It would unwarrantably extend an essay already too prolix for its present shape, were I to attempt any farther illustration of the manner in which venerable theological forms, regarded as expedients of thought,

are often useful aids to devotion. The same principle is manifestly applicable to many other original materials of the creeds; and with this remark we must leave that branch of the subject. We have already seen how Christian experience, in some of its most intensely spiritual forms, has shown a marked tendency to pantheistic expression. And the only inconsistency fairly chargeable upon the mystics, was their oblivion of the incongruity, which we cannot but observe, between their implied theory of man's relation to the Infinite, and the authorities which they professed to revere as finally binding. But by the surrender of both Protestant and Catholic dogmas of infallibility, we gain a point of view, from which the pantheistic suggestions of the widest generalizations, and the original devout impulses of Christianity, seem not only reconcileable, but actually at one. For as Christianity, fairly interpreted, rests in the consciousness of God, and seeks only to give force to that consciousness by expedients of thought, so the pantheism to which modern theories lead, makes no pretence of scientifically defining the relation of man to the Infinite; but insisting only on the fact of one all-comprehensive Substance and Power, leaves the facts of religious experience to speak for themselves as to the practical significance and expression of the God-consciousness. As before urged, it is ridiculous to expect from pantheism, what is never demanded from any other form of religion, a satisfactory explanation of all the

mysteries of being. Its claim is simply this, that as it is the conclusion towards which the metaphysical corollaries of physical research unmistakeably point, so, if only man's consciousness of relationship to the Infinite be allowed, it is perfectly consistent with all the indubitable facts of religious history.

But the reader of these pages has been haunted by the dread problem of evil, which the public Sphinx always thrusts upon adventurous travellers in bye-ways of thought, offering them an alternative scarcely less terrible than that attributed to the Theban monster. For amongst the indubitable facts of religious history, certainly none is more obtrusive, and none more significant, than the sense of sin. And with this is associated a conviction that grief and pain, that misery in all its forms, is to a very large extent the direct or indirect result of sin. Nay, farther, even where suffering cannot be traced to any root of guilt, there is a very strong and natural tendency to regard it as a congruous element in the constitution of a world where moral discipline, or redemption from sin by suffering nobly borne, seems to present the ultimate goal of evolution. But there is a very prevalent idea that pantheism, so far from giving any satisfactory account of evil, must necessarily explain it away; that it must set at nought the convictions of conscience, and treat the whole moral nature of man as an organized lie. Yet it is difficult to see why this should be the case with pantheism, more than with any other

theory which makes the being and attributes of a beneficent God to be the only eternal facts. It is impossible, within the limits of the present essay, to deal fully with a subject, which presents problems hitherto insoluble by any theory of life. All we may attempt is to show, that in regard to the existence of evil, pantheism does not labour under greater difficulties than any other theory; while at the same time it furnishes stronger ground for the faith that on the scale of infinity all is well.

All religions alike, which do any justice to man's consciousness of relation to the Infinite, regard Omnipotent Goodness as the beginning and the end, the prime cause, if not the ultimate ground and substance, of all that is. But does goodness create evil? Is there in perfect Holiness, inhabiting eternity, any germ from which sin could conceivably be evolved, without casting back the shadow of its pollution on the nameless splendour of creation's source? Such questions are never breathed in any religious mind without awakening an indignant avaunt! as though a fiend were whispering at the ear. And most rightly so: for such a repudiation is inspired by loyalty to some of the most sacred predispositions implanted by God within our souls. But if this is felt to be a legitimate defiance of logic when we regard Omnipotent Goodness as the First Cause of all things, why should it not be allowed to those who identify Omnipotent Goodness with the sum of all Being? The truth is, that in regard to this

question, as in regard to many others, practical habit ignores insoluble difficulties. It is only through the startling suggestion of some other possible attitude of mind, that such difficulties force themselves on our attention; and then they are instantly associated with the new proposal. I do not, of course, mean that thoughtful upholders of ordinary theistic theories have been insensible to the apparent incongruity between their recognition of actual evil, and their insistance on original eternal Goodness as the First Cause of all things. But I do say that their constant association of certain practical expedients of thought with their own theory, does, as a matter of fact, lessen the pressure of the problem of evil, in the contemplation of the world from their adopted point of view. Farther, I believe that when they try to realize the possibility of any other theory, they drop these expedients of thought; so that the problem stands before them in naked sternness. Yet the practical habit of mind, which they adopt in considering evil from their own point of view, is not the exclusive privilege of any particular theory; but is a necessity of the spiritual life, not one whit more incongruous with pantheism, than it is with the First Article of the Anglican Church. Nay, more, I may venture to suggest that such a practical economy of thought is far less obviously repugnant to a pantheistic generalization, than it is to ordinary theology.

We need not care to discuss the more vulgar

expedients adopted, to diminish the pressure of the mystery by increasing the distance of its origin. And yet a reference to one or two may serve to illustrate the fallacy just mentioned. There have been millions, and there are still myriads of simple minds, to whom the most satisfactory expedient for dealing with the problem of evil has been to trace it up to the Devil. When asked how Satan fell, they probably answer, through pride; and if it is farther enquired, how pride could be suggested in a pure and happy world where no thought of evil had ever before entered, they will reply frankly enough, they do not know; and that this is one of the mysteries about which they are content to remain ignorant. Yet if, in the hearing of these good people, any one should adventure a doubt as to the real existence of Satan, they will ask with all the naïve sagacity of innocence, "How then did evil come into the world?" "Did not God make man upright?" they enquire; "And if so; how should he ever have gone astray without some one to tempt him? The actual state of the world confutes you. If you do away with Satan, you will have to explain away sin." The fact is that the notion of a potent demon whose fall is dateless, removes the difficulty to a distance, and puts it out of sight. As old-fashioned piano-tuners used to sweep all the inevitable discords of an ordinary keyed instrument into one or two infrequently used scales, which they called "the wolf," so these people gather up all the infinitesimal

difficulties of evil into one huge mystery, which they call the Devil. And then any one, who deprives them of such a resource, is most unreasonably called upon to explain away human sin. But it is manifestly just as much open to those, who deny the real existence of Satan, to acknowledge the actual fact of human sin without pretending to account for it; as it is open to believers in the Devil, to insist upon the hypothetical fact of his fall, without professing to explain it. Nay, the former position is much more reasonable than the other, because it confines itself to real experience.

Yet those who are accustomed to the constant association of sin with Satanic agency, fall into the habit of practically ignoring the difficulty, by removing it to a convenient distance; and then they accuse, of creating an insoluble mystery, those whose only crime is, that they put the difficulty where candour requires us to place it, among the facts of daily experience. In the same way the story of the fall of man is treated by those who still insist on the historical character of the narrative in Genesis. If any one calls attention to the clearly mythical elements of the legend, he is instantly confronted with the depravity of mankind, and is asked how he accounts for it. Should he modestly decline attempting to account for it at all, while he acknowledges it as a serious fact of experience, he is told that his position is grossly irrational; and perhaps it is scornfully added, that

this is only a specimen of the puerile absurdities into which intellectual pride inevitably falls. True, these good people do not think that the magic trees and the talking serpent do away with all mystery. But the mystery involved here is by constant association familiarized. It does not startle them with any feeling of incongruity. On the contrary, when they are saddened by the daily records of crime, or wounded by the injustice of friends, they are accustomed to stop reflection with the thought, that nothing else is to be expected from a fallen creature like man. It does not occur to them that this solves nothing. It would appear to them impious to suggest that the story of childlike innocence beguiled by a malignant demon beneath the eyes of a beneficent Power, who was at that time working miracles every day, involves any serious imputations on divine providence. But propose to them the theory of an evolution that knows no Fall—that advances from the imperfect towards the perfect, from the beast to the saint; and, compelled for a moment to look beyond the bounds of a conventional system, they will see difficulties which they never saw before; and these difficulties they will charge their interlocutor with creating.

With certain differences, the relation of pantheism to questions of sin and evil often becomes the subject of similar fallacies. The main difference is this: that whereas in the issues just noted, between a more conservative and a more advanced theology, it is impos-

sible for the latter to give to the expedients of thought adopted by the former anything more than a fanciful and figurative sense; pantheism is able to adopt, without any far-fetched interpretation, precisely the same practical attitude towards sin, as that which is assumed by the most intelligent advocates of ordinary theology. Those who do not believe in a personal Devil, may undoubtedly use such a conception as an expedient of thought, when they would think or speak strongly of the active and apparently omnipresent influences of sin. But the conception is to them something very different indeed from what it is to others; it becomes a merely metaphorical impersonation. Much more real is the use which the pantheist makes of the expedients employed by thoughtful theologians in their treatment of sin. For, as we have urged, there is no reason whatever in the pantheistic position, why sin should not be recognized with quite as much solemnity, and with quite as earnest a desire for redemption, as under any other theory. The opposite assumption springs from just the sort of fallacy of which illustrations have been given. A practical attitude is taken up, in which the ultimate bearing of certain great difficulties is ignored, while only actual facts are recognized; and this practical attitude becomes by custom associated with a certain theological theory. But now if another theory is started, there is no association between this and the practical habit of regarding sin. The problem is therefore seen in its

undisguised difficulty; and this difficulty is attributed to the suggested theory.

The first article of religion in the Book of Common Prayer asserts, that "there is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible." Now, these words exclude, as plainly as it is possible to do so, any original cause but One, by whom all creatures, and of course all the possibilities and powers involved in creature life, are produced, occasioned, or sustained. It is confessedly impossible to explain how the existence of evil can be consistent with such a view of the origin of the world. It is needless to perplex ourselves with the subtleties of such a question. The only point of interest for us is the position practically assumed, in reference to the subject, by most ordinary forms of religion. The ninth article tells us of a "fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil." Here there are two expedients of thought, which are designed apparently to arrest speculation, and to prescribe a certain practical habit of mind. The one expedient is the reference to Adam, which we may dismiss. Whatever construction may be put upon it by the ingenuity of Broad Church clergymen, it is perfectly clear that the article traces the beginning of human

sin to a historical Adam, and damns us all for his fault. Of such an expedient as that, no thought which is really characteristic of the present age can make the slightest use. The other and more practical expedient traces evil to the man's own nature, and asserts that his perverse bent towards wrong is a proper subject of condemnation. There can be no dispute that this answers to experience. We feel that evil thoughts and words do as a matter of fact spring up within us, while, even in the moment of yielding to them, we know that they are damnable. But who can show the ultimate consistency of this experience with the assertion of the First Article, that One of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, is the Maker and Preserver of all things? No theologian pretends to do it. What all alike do is to make use of certain expedients of thought, such as created will, moral responsibility, secondary originating causes, and the like, all of which have a practical significance, while none of them can be traced up to any conceivable relation of theoretic congruity with "an infinite power, wisdom, and goodness," "the Maker and Preserver of all things." By the use of expedients of thought, men conceal from themselves any ontological questions as to the relation of the individual creature will to the eternal Energy, without whom nothing is strong, not even a rebellious determination; and they picture a race of sinners as holding towards God that relation of mixed dependence and independence, which children bear

towards a father. No matter that children can run about by themselves, apart from their parents, while, on the other hand, a man cannot breathe or move without the sustaining energy of God. No matter that parents can only speak to the ear, while God is said to be All in all and through all. The conception is found to be a useful expedient of thought; and therefore it is held fast.

Thus theologians associate with the idea of Infinite Power and Benevolence, without whom nothing can exist, a certain practical habit of regarding sin as an evil to be resisted and cured. But they do not trouble themselves with the strange reflection, that this same sin must be a rebellion of creatures, who draw from the Divine energy strength to resist Omnipotence, and who live, and move, and breathe in a Being of infinite goodness, while they are destroying themselves. Yet, if instead of calling God "Infinite Power, wisdom, and goodness," "the Maker and Preserver of all things," we call Him Infinite Power, wisdom, and goodness, the substance, and the sum of all things, —these same theologians will tell us that we must explain away sin, and deny the moral nature of humanity. Our reply must be, that we do not feel called upon to do anything of the kind. The difficulties that they see in our position exist equally in their own; only, when they consider ours, they drop those expedients of thought, which had beguiled them into a forgetfulness of ultimate issues. But

those expedients are just as much available for us as for them; and our critics are just as little capable as we are of giving to such expedients a significance ultimately congruous with their theory of the world. We do not accept the pantheistic view because we dream that it can give omniscience to mortal men, or bring the infinite relations of finite facts within our cognizance. We accept it only because, while it introduces no new difficulties, it lifts us for ever above the reach of many that threaten the destruction of faith. We accept it because any other idea of the Eternal is rapidly becoming untenable; because the notion of a creation out of nothing is intolerable; because anthropomorphic views of Deity are too narrow, seem indeed almost impious, now that our eyes are opened to the boundless magnificence of existence; because when we come to think of it, it is self-evident; for that which was in the beginning, which is now, and ever shall be, must be God. But because, in our largest interpretations of our conscious relation to the infinite, we bow to commanding truth, it does not follow that in matters of daily experience, the ultimate bearings of which we cannot see, we should take leave of our common sense. To us also, as well as to any theologians, it may be, in the present state of our knowledge, a safe expedient to refrain from tracing moral evil farther than the perverse will. At any rate, we shall not endeavour to explain away because we cannot explain. *Moral* good and evil are, after all, more matters of practical recog-

nition in the conscience, than of any philosophical theory. For us that is most divine, which, like love and truth, tends most to deepen our consciousness of the unity of being. For us that is most evil which, like hatred and lies, tends to freeze us up in self, and to distract the world. But we may be well content to recognise, in the conscientious distinction of right and wrong, a special human susceptibility, given in the course of evolution, to match man's intellectual outlook with an inward sense of the holiness of universal life. Be this as it may, we are no more called upon to explain the mystery of evil, than are the believers in an Omnipotence altogether severed from the world; which produced it from nothingness, and of design made it such as to become what now it is. The whole question therefore of sin and suffering may be relegated to special discussion by those whom it may concern. For the change, from belief in an Omnipotence enthroned above the world to the recognition of the Being who is All in all, involves no fresh difficulty whatever.

Nay rather, if anything, it gives a greater fearlessness in condemning evil in man; because we are assured that this is no work of any devil, nor any corollary of an arbitrary constitution of creation. But so far as we can form any conception of it at all, beyond the practical recognition of which I have spoken, we see in it the reverse of what is divine, the subjective tendency of the creature to isolate and hug himself in his frag-

mentary life. As says the "Theologia Germanica;" as indeed all say, though not always so boldly, who believe in Eternal God; evil is no positive existence. Even the Devil, says our brave old monk, so far as he exists at all is good; that is, so far as he has any true being. "No creature is contrary to God, or hateful or grievous unto Him in so far as it liveth, knoweth, hath power to do or produce ought, and so forth, for all this is not contrary to God. That an evil spirit, or a man is, liveth, and the like, is altogether good and of God; for God is the Being of all that are, and the Life of all that live, and the Wisdom of all the wise; for all things have their being more truly in God than in themselves; and also all their powers, knowledge, life, and the rest; for if it were not so, God would not be all good."* But this total good is to our experience so manifested in and by finite creatures, that the defect of one is made up by the superabundance of another. No creatures, that we see, precisely and perfectly fulfil the ideal they suggest. But where one is less, another is more than it should be; and so no doubt the perfection of the Infinite, the All in all, may comprehend millions of imperfections, which are lost and swallowed up in the completeness of the whole. But such speculations are no essential part of the present essay. This only perhaps remains to be said: that the mystery of evil, which some materialists have thought inconsistent with the assumption of an Eternal and Universal Life,

* Theol. Germ. c. 36.

is on the contrary fatal to any other interpretation of the world. For we know how mechanical forces work. They either combine smoothly, with a perfect result; or if there be any want of harmony, and consequent discord, the mischief goes on in an increasing ratio, until disintegration and dissolution follow. It always seems to me that if molecular mechanics could build up a world, they must needs construct one in which everything should work smoothly; or they could not build at all. And if in their half-finished structure any disorder should creep in, it could not possibly heal itself. It must go on increasing till chaos returned. The very fact that things do not work smoothly, and that instead of degenerating into deeper discord, they produce higher harmonies in the progress of evolution, seems proof demonstrative, that at the heart of the world is something more than molecular mechanics. Wherever healing power is, there is life. And so any great process of redemption is bright with the tokens of a Living God.

What has been said of sin and evil may be repeated, though more briefly, of immortality. Pantheism does not re-open the question, but leaves it just where it was, to be answered by the human sense of incongruity between death and the consciousness of God; between the actual realization of eternal life and any possible annihilation. The mystery of matter—our comparative ignorance of everything save our own bright spark of consciousness—the appeal of strong

predisposition to the loyalty of faith,—and the ever-growing human consciousness of human relation to the Infinite, bear their testimony to men of all theologies, and are certainly not weakened by pantheism. Rather the reverse; for it seems as though this finite consciousness were but a bubble filled with nothingness, which finds its true substance once again in a return to its infinite source. Certainly the hope of immortality does not depend upon the legitimacy of conceiving God according to our own image. It rests rather in the faith that however much the ultimate constitution of the universe transcends, it does not contradict, human reason. And inasmuch as the highest reach of human achievement is still prophetic of farther possibilities, absolute annihilation is felt as an intolerable incongruity. Nay farther, as true beauty and constructive energy can never belong to lies, it is impossible to think that a passion like the longing for immortality, fruitful as it has been in all heroic virtues and social weal, can be a hollow falsehood or a foul growth of superstition. Those again who feel that the resurrection of Christ, whatever may have been its physical or metaphysical character, does prove the survival of Christ's personal life in higher forms, look upon him as the deliverer of those "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." But there is not one of these grounds of hope,—not even the last, if only it is held as a sublunary fact,—which is not just as much open to

pantheism as to any other form of religion. For pantheism is beyond the temptation of trying to distort this or the other particular fact of experience or memory. All it asserts is that the tendency of knowledge, on the whole, is against belief in a Creator outside the world, and in favour of the identification of Divinity with the universe considered as One and All. It may indeed be said that allowing no beginning and no end, pantheism is bound to assert the pre-existence, before this mortal life, of beings whom it calls immortal. But this is true only of the eternal ground of our phenomenal consciousness. It must indeed be conceded, that the relation of this phenomenal personal life to the past and the future, beyond the bounds of birth and death, is a mystery which no straining of thought, nay, even no effort of faith, can lessen. But when we remember that the one thing we know most clearly is our own spark of consciousness, while all else is known only as an array of limiting forces, we may well urge that the vagueness of this thought of pre-existence need take nothing from the strength of conscious immortality. It limits the power of prophetic anticipation; nothing more. And when we bear in mind how a Christian Apostle could frame no expectation for the future other than conformity to the unknown and unimaginable glory of the ascended Christ,* we should not repine if the larger life

* "Brethren, we know not what we shall be; but we know that we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John.

beyond death remains a hope too grand for any earthly form. I live; this I know. And all around me is a Power, immeasurable, inscrutable; of which I can only think, that it lives more grandly and mightily than I, folding me in its embrace, and making a reverent feeling of my own nothingness the supremest bliss. Whence I came I know not; whither I go I cannot tell. But every moment of true communion with the Infinite opens out eternity. Whatever tenfold complicated change has happened or may come; however far my sense of life may be transfused through a now inconceivable range; however strangely the bounds which now limit my personal life may be broken through; however unimaginably my consciousness of God may be enlarged; it is impossible that the more real can be merged in the less real; and while material phenomena are but phantoms, God Himself only is more real than I.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that while our knowledge of the phenomena which manifest the Infinite yearly makes more difficult, and threatens to make impossible, the notion of God as one Being amongst others, our growing recognition of the oneness of the universe, and, we must add, of its infinity, compels us to identify Deity with that absolute existence which involves all in itself. The universe, with all its little cycles of evolution, makes on us the impression of eternity. We can as little conceive its birth as we can imagine its death. The theory of an "opifex

deus," repugnant to Cicero's friend, is more than ever repulsive now. True reverence commands us to silence, before the majesty of heaven and earth. That our own life rests in eternal being, and is essentially indestructible, we are strongly assured; but the personal form, which arises from phenomenal limitation and separateness, we dare not attribute to that which transcends definition, and is All in all. Failing of theoretic certainty beyond the bounds of experience and what it implies, we follow Positivism so far as to rest in the actual facts of life. But leaving Positivism behind, we maintain that facts have in them always something of eternity. At least they rouse in us a sense of relation to that, which is beyond all single facts because it involves them all. For the conscience, no sanction is great enough, unless it binds by the sacredness of some eternal self-consistency. As an object of devotion, nothing, which leaves outside it a glory vaster than itself, can ever satisfy the soul. And so we believe that the Infinite, which is manifest in all things, breathes in our hearts, with inspirations suggestive of the unselfish life that lives only in the common good. By such inspirations men have been led on from the worship of dumb-founded wonder touched with fear, to that consciousness of God as deepest self and highest law, which is the very spirit of Christ. And in obedience to such inspirations swelled by voices of the past, interpreted by needs of the present, we want no farther theory of God; but are

satisfied with loyalty to such laws as shine out distinctly from His inscrutable grandeur. Indeed, Christian Pantheism is, properly speaking, no theory. It results from the sacrifice of theological dogma through an impulse of reverence. It is a simple recognition of facts within and without, which engender the sense of a universal eternal Life beyond our comprehension, and yet, in its laws and inspirations, the object of supreme allegiance.

That such views should find much present acceptance among those who most emphatically "profess and call themselves Christians," is not to be expected. And those upon whom the name sits conventionally, while, in their calm pursuit of exact knowledge, they behold devotional fervour with unaffected wonder, will see too many intellectual shortcomings in the arguments here advanced, to give them a second thought. But the pioneers of the common life of the future are not always the brilliant discoverers, nor the intellectual leaders of the present age. These earn deserved gratitude by the great principles they propound; but they have often little knowledge of the common human needs to which those principles have to be applied. They peer so eagerly into special points of research, on which microscopic lenses and reflected lights can be concentrated; that the sacred twilight, in which most human life is passed, appears to them blank darkness. Yet it is in this twilight that over-arching infinity most attracts the eye. But there are here and there,—they

seem to be multiplying now,—those whom neither arbitrary belief nor the hard electric glare of scientific knowledge can satisfy. It is not superiority of intellect, it is simply a determination to acknowledge manifest facts, which separates them from the sympathies of their more easily-satisfied fellow Christians. Being readers, though not scholars, and having common sense, though not linguistic knowledge, they cannot understand why one rule of criticism should be applied to the Vedas, and altogether a different one to the Pentateuch. They have difficulties as to the consistency of the judgment, which, in criticizing a Chaldee account of the Deluge, relegates to mythopœic imagination all miracles peculiar to that version; but which at once accepts the narrative as a valuable confirmation of impossible Scriptural wonders. They feel that the range of human contemplation has outgrown the framework of Hebrew history and cosmology; and they are uneasy at the disingenuous artifices, by which their spiritual leaders endeavour to disguise the fact. They are uncertain how far miracle is at all a valuable element in religion. And they cannot deny the improbabilities, which hostile critics point out in the Gospel narratives. The lectures they have heard, and the books they have read, have given them some inkling of that sense of universal order, which so enthralls the scientific mind; and they begin to fear that the image they have framed to themselves of the God they love, is in some respects as incongruous with

the majesty of Eternal Being, as was the golden calf into which the Israelites changed their glory.

But these men have another side to their nature. No long apprenticeship to some special enquiry has strained all their faculties in one direction. They are not merely animated microscopes, fitted with photographic plates to record impressions. They are, for the most part, engaged in active business; but all their lives long they have borne within them some high sense of a humble mission, after the pattern of Christ. They have worshipped, and they must worship; for it is to their better life like vital breath. They have prayed; and though they never saw a miracle worked in answer, nor do they expect it now, yet they have felt the exercise so ennobling, and have had therein such practical experience of a communion with a larger, holier, more loving Life than their own, that, however wrong they now feel they have been in their conceptions of God, they must even pray on. They have found relief in endeavouring so to interest young souls in the glowing pictures of the Gospel, that the spirit might prevail over the letter, and remain immortal in the heart. They have haunted scenes of poverty and distress, even of misery and vice; bewailing their own impotence; struck dumb at times by the dark mystery of sin and woe; but always struggling to utter some broken words of comfort and hope. They have not reasoned about, so much as felt after God; assured that God never shrouds Himself in any expedient

falsehood or pious fraud, but is found by the candour which goes hand-in-hand with loyal devotion. Their experience has not always been that which their pastors and teachers assured them it would be. "Go and work for human souls;" they were told; "then you will know whether the Gospel is true or not." And so they do; but not quite perhaps in the sense which was expected. They have not found their experience of starving families prove to them, that Christ literally fed five thousand people with a few small loaves and fishes. They have not found their helpless sympathy with agonized bereavement make them more sure, that in former times apostles and prophets could raise the dead. They have not learned in fever-stricken courts to feel any greater probability in stories of pestilences sent by divine vengeance, and miraculously stayed by sacrifice or prayer. On the contrary, they have been led to condemn with some bitterness the ecclesiasticism, which so often hinders social reform by trusting too blindly to apostolic precedent, or even monkish patterns of benevolence. They have become convinced that conventicles in every street, and prayer-meetings in every court would yet, without the spread of better education, and without some great changes in the relations of capital and labour, leave the next generation as squalid and as hopeless as this. But for all that, they have felt by contact with the unsophisticated poor, how true it is that "man cannot live by bread

alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." They have realized how dreary, how terrible, how monstrous human existence would be, were man, gifted and tempted as he is, without any hold on an eternal life. They have seen how the simple and the coarse, nay the base and vile, have, no less than the most earnest thinker, the consciousness of a relation to what they do not know as Infinite, but which commands and awes them at times as no earthly power can do. They have proved, too, how the highest law of life, subordination to the universal good, comes home to the rudest heart, when it is exhibited in the tragedy of Gethsemane and Calvary. Such men and women as these are not indeed many; for their fellow-labourers, for the most part, think intellectual blindness a spiritual duty. They are not many; but they are in a very true sense "the powers of the world to come." For that crowning race, which is our farthest vision in the files of coming generations, will not be men of science merely; still less will they be priests or puritans. They will love knowledge like the first; but they will have more true reverence than either of the latter. Meanwhile, the forerunners of that future race, notwithstanding all their determination to face the facts of their time, are often well nigh appalled at the fundamental character of that revolution in opinion through which they are passing. And some of them begin to feel, that nothing can ultimately satisfy them which reserves, under any form, the neces-

sity for believing, as a matter of faith, in miraculous, spasmodic, partial, or non-natural modes of revelation. For such men as these, it is hoped that these pages have not been written in vain. The materialistic language of science need not trouble those who have gone through materialism, and come out at the other side. Philosophic despair need not paralyze those who feel that our very ignorance of God declares Him. Confusion between the claims of authoritative opinion and appeals to loyalty of soul need not distract us, if we keep our sight for facts, and limit our faith to those inward principles which demand a confidence too strong for proof. An earnest endeavour after a practical expression of our conscious relation to the Infinite will, by divine grace, sustain a spiritual life incapable of bigotry or intellectual fear. And finally, the contemplation of the universe, not as the mere handiwork only, but as the very vision of the Almighty, fills our souls with the presence of a self-evident, Eternal Power, who is as near to our hearts as He was to the soul of Elijah, and whose glory is more manifest to us than to those who trembled beneath the thunder-smitten Sinai.

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